



PE 132,459

- 132,460



**Library
of the
University of Toronto**

Belle O. Wall

from the author

With congratulations on
B. O. W.'s likeness to
the heroine

Sept. 30th 1895

A DAUGHTER OF TO-DAY

VOL. I.

NEW LIBRARY NOVELS.

CHRISTINA CHARD. By MRS. CAMPBELL PRAED.
3 vols.

IN THE FACE OF THE WORLD. By ALAN ST.
AUBYN. 2 vols.

JACK DOYLE'S DAUGHTER. By R. E. FRAN-
CILLON. 3 vols.

THE ONE TOO MANY. By E. LYNN LINTON. 3 vols.

A SOLDIER OF FORTUNE. By L. T. MEADE.
3 vols.

SAINT ANN'S. By W. E. NORRIS. 2 vols.

IN DIREST PERIL. By D. CHRISTIE MURRAY.
3 vols.

DOROTHY'S DOUBLE. By G. A. HENTY. 3 vols.

THE BURDEN OF ISABEL. By J. MACLAREN
COBBAN. 3 vols.

THE COMMON ANCESTOR. By JOHN HILL. 3 vols.

TWO OFFENDERS. By OUIDA. 1 vol.

THE KING'S ASSEGAI. By BERTRAM MITFORD.
1 vol.

THE CONSTABLE OF ST. NICHOLAS. By EDWIN
LESTER ARNOLD. 1 vol.

A FAIR COLONIST. By ERNEST GLANVILLE. 1 vol.

A PROTÉGÉE OF JACK HAMLIN'S. By BRET
HARTE. 1 vol.

London: CHATTO & WINDUS, Piccadilly.

A DAUGHTER OF TO-DAY

A Nobel

BY

MRS. EVERARD COTES

(SARA JEANNETTE DUNCAN)

AUTHOR OF

"A SOCIAL DEPARTURE," "AN AMERICAN GIRL IN LONDON," ETC.



IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

London

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1894

A DAUGHTER OF TO-DAY.

CHAPTER I.

MISS KIMPSEY dropped into an arm-chair in Mrs. Leslie Bell's drawing-room, and crossed her small dusty feet before her while she waited for Mrs. Leslie Bell. Sitting there, thinking a little of how tired she was and a great deal of what she had come to say, Miss Kimpsey enjoyed a sense of consideration that came through the ceiling with the muffled sound of rapid footsteps in the chamber above. Mrs. Bell would be "down in a minute," the maid had said. Miss Kimpsey was inclined to forgive a greater delay, with this evidence of hasteful preparation going on overhead. The longer she had to ponder her mission the better, and

she sat up nervously straight pondering it, tracing with her parasol a sage green block in the elderly æstheticated pattern of the carpet.

Miss Kimpsey was thirty-five, with a pale oblong little face that looked younger under its softening "bang" of fair curls across the the forehead. She was a buff and grey coloured creature, with a narrow square chin, and narrow square shoulders, and a flatness and straightness about her everywhere that gave her rather the effect of a wedge, to which the big black straw hat she wore tilted a little on one side somehow conduced. Miss Kimpsey might have figured anywhere as a representative of the New England feminine surplus—there was a distinct suggestion of character under her unimportant little features—and her profession was proclaimed in her person, apart from the smudge of chalk on the sleeve of her jacket. She had been born and brought up and left over in Illinois, however,—in the town of Sparta, Illinois. She had developed her conscience there, and no doubt, if one knew it well, it would show peculiarities of local expansion.

directly connected with hot corn bread for breakfast as opposed to the accredited diet of legumes upon which consciences arrive at such successful maturity in the East. It was at all events a conscience in excellent controlling order. It directed Miss Kimpsey, for example, to teach three times a week in the boys' night school through the winter, no matter how sharply the wind blew off Lake Michigan, in addition to her daily duties at the High School, where for ten years she had imparted instruction in the "English branches," translating Chaucer into the modern dialect of Sparta, Illinois, for the benefit of Miss Elfrida Bell, among others. It had sent her on this occasion to see Mrs. Leslie Bell, and Miss Kimpsey could remember circumstances under which she had obeyed her conscience with more alacrity.

"It isn't," said Miss Kimpsey with internal discouragement, "as if I knew her well."

Miss Kimpsey did not know Mrs. Bell at all well. Mrs. Bell was president of the Browning Club, and Miss Kimpsey was a member. They met, too, in the social jumble of fancy

fairs in aid of the new church organ. They had a bowing acquaintance—that is, Mrs. Bell had. Miss Kimpsey's part of it was responsive, and she always gave a thought to her boots and her gloves when she met Mrs. Bell. It was not that the Spartan social circle which Mrs. Bell adorned had any vulgar prejudice against the fact that Miss Kimpsey earned her own living—more than one of its ornaments had done the same thing—and Miss Kimpsey's relations were all “in grain” and obviously respectable. It was simply that none of the Kimpseys, prosperous or poor, had ever been in society in Sparta, for reasons which Sparta itself would probably be unable to define; and this one was not likely to be thrust among the elect because she taught school and enjoyed life upon a scale of ethics.

Mrs. Bell's drawing-room was a slight distraction to Miss Kimpsey's nervous thoughts. The little school teacher had never been in it before, and it impressed her. “It's just what you would expect her parlour to be,” she said to herself, looking furtively

round. She could not help her sense of impropriety; she had always been taught that it was very bad manners to observe anything in another person's house, but she could not help looking either. She longed to get up and read the names of the books behind the glass doors of the tall bookcase at the other end of the room, for the sake of the little quiver of respectful admiration she knew they would give her; but she did not dare to do that. Her eyes went from the bookcase to the photogravure of Doré's "Entry into Jerusalem," under which three Japanese dolls were arranged with charming effect. "The Reading Magdalen" caught them next, a coloured photograph; and then a Magdalen of more obscure origin, in much blackened oils and a very deep frame; then still another Magdalen, more modern, in monochrome. In fact, the room was full of Magdalens, and on an easel in the corner stood a Mater Dolorosa lifting up her streaming eyes. Granting the capacity to take them seriously they might have depressed some people, but they elevated Miss Kimpsey.

She was equally elevated by the imitation willow pattern plates over the door, and the painted yellow daffodils on the panels, and the orange-coloured *Revue des Deux Mondes* on the corner of the table, and the absence of all bows or draperies from the furniture. Miss Kimpsey's own parlour was excrescent with bows and draperies. "She is above them," thought Miss Kimpsey, with a little pang. The room was so dark that she could not see how old the *Revue* was: she did not know either that it was always there, that unexceptionable Parisian periodical, with Dante in the original and red leather, *Academy Notes* and the *Nineteenth Century*, all helping to furnish Mrs. Leslie Bell's drawing-room in a manner in accordance with her tastes; but if she had, Miss Kimpsey would have been equally impressed. It took intellect even to select these things. The other books, Miss Kimpsey noticed, by the numbers labelled on their backs, were mostly from the circulating library—"David Grieve," "Cometh up as a Flower," "The Earthly Paradise," Ruskin's "Stones of Venice," Marie

Corelli's "Romance of Two Worlds." The mantelpiece was arranged in geometrical disorder, but it had a gilt clock under a glass shade precisely in the middle.

When the gilt clock indicated, in a mincing way, that Miss Kimpsey had been kept waiting fifteen minutes, Mrs. Bell came in. She had fastened her last button and assumed the expression appropriate to Miss Kimpsey at the foot of the stair. She was a tall thin woman, with no colour and rather narrow brown eyes much wrinkled round about, and a forehead that loomed at you, and greyish hair twisted high into a knot behind, a knot from which a wispy end almost invariably escaped. When she smiled her mouth curved downwards, showing a number of large even white teeth, and made deep lines, which suggested various things, according to the nature of the smile, on either side of her face. As a rule one might take them to mean a rather deprecating acceptance of life as it stands—they seemed intended for that; and then Mrs. Bell would express an enthusiasm and contradict them. As she

came through the door under the "Entry into Jerusalem," saying that she really must apologize, she was sure it was unpardonable keeping Miss Kimpsey waiting like this, the lines expressed an intention of being as agreeable as possible without committing herself to return Miss Kimpsey's visit.

"Why no, Mrs. Bell," Miss Kimpsey said earnestly, with a protesting buff and grey smile, "I didn't mind waiting a particle, honestly I didn't. Besides, I presume it's early for a call, but I thought I'd drop in on my way from school." Miss Kimpsey was determined that Mrs. Bell should have every excuse that charity could invent for her. She sat down again, and agreed with Mrs. Bell that they were having lovely weather, especially when they remembered what a disagreeable fall it had been last year; certainly this October had been just about perfect. The ladies used these superlatives in the tone of mild defiance that almost any statement of fact has upon feminine lips in America. It did not seem to matter that their observations were entirely in union.

"I thought I'd run in," said Miss Kimpsey, screwing herself up by the arm of her chair.

"Yes?"

"And speak to you about a thing I've been thinking a good deal of, Mrs. Bell, this last day or two. It's about Elfrida."

Mrs. Bell's expression became judicial. If this was a complaint—and she was not accustomed to complaints of Elfrida—she would be careful how she took it.

"I hope——" she began.

"Oh, you needn't worry, Mrs. Bell. It's nothing about her conduct, and it's nothing about her school work."

"Well, that's a relief," said Mrs. Bell, as if she had expected it would be. "But I know she's bad at figures. The child can't help that, though—she gets it from me. I think I ought to ask you to be lenient with her on that account."

"I have nothing to do with the mathematical branches, Mrs. Bell. I teach only English to the senior classes. But I haven't heard Mr. Jackson complain of Elfrida at

all." Feeling that she could no longer keep her errand at arm's length, Miss Kimpsey desperately closed with it. "I've come—I hope you won't mind, Mrs. Bell—— Elfrida has been quoting Rousseau in her compositions, and I thought you'd like to know."

"In the original?" asked Mrs. Bell with interest. "I didn't think her French was advanced enough for that."

"No, from a translation," Miss Kimpsey replied. "Her sentence ran, 'As the gifted Jean Jacques Rousseau told the world in his "Confessions"——' I forget the rest. That was the part that struck me most. She had evidently been reading the works of Rousseau."

"Very likely; Elfrida has her own subscription at the library," Mrs. Bell said speculatively. "It shows a taste in reading beyond her years, doesn't it, Miss Kimpsey? The child is only fifteen."

"Well, *I've* never read Rousseau," the little teacher stated definitely. "Isn't he atheistical, Mrs. Bell, and improper every way?"

Mrs. Bell raised her eyebrows and pushed

out her lips at the severity of this ignorant condemnation.

"He was a genius, Miss Kimpsey; rather, I should say he *is*, for genius cannot die. He is much thought of in France. People there make a little shrine of the house he occupied with Madame Warens, you know."

"Oh!" returned Miss Kimpsey. "*French* people."

"Yes. The French are peculiarly happy in the way they sanctify genius," said Mrs. Bell, vaguely, with a feeling that she was wasting a really valuable idea.

"Well, you'll have to excuse me, Mrs. Bell. I'd always heard you entertained about as liberal views as there were going on any subject, but I didn't expect they embraced Rousseau." Miss Kimpsey spoke quite meekly. "I know we live in an age of progress, but I guess I'm not as progressive as some."

"Many will stay behind," interrupted Mrs. Bell, impartially, "but many more will advance."

"And I thought maybe Elfrida had been

reading that author without your knowledge or approval, and that perhaps you'd like to know."

"I neither approve nor disapprove," said Mrs. Bell, posing her elbow on the table, her chin upon her hand, and her judgment, as it were, upon her chin. "I think her mind ought to develop along the lines that nature intended; I think nature is wiser than I am,"—there was an effect of condescending explanation here,—“and I don't feel justified in interfering. I may be wrong——”

“Oh no!” said Miss Kimpsey.

“But Elfrida's reading has always been very general. She has a remarkable mind, if you will excuse my saying so; it devours everything. I can't tell you *when* she learned to read, Miss Kimpsey; it seemed to come to her. She has often reminded me of what you see in the biographies of distinguished people about their youth—there are really a great many points of similarity sometimes. I shouldn't be surprised if Elfrida did anything. I wish *I* had had her opportunities.”

"She's growing very good-looking," remarked Miss Kimpsey.

"It's an interesting face," Mrs. Bell returned. "Here is her last photograph. It's full of soul, I think. She posed herself," Mrs. Bell added unconsciously.

It was a cabinet photograph of a girl whose eyes looked definitely out of it, dark, large, well-shaded, full of desire to be beautiful at once expressed and fulfilled. The nose was a trifle heavily blocked, but the mouth had sensitiveness and charm. There was a heaviness in the chin too, but the free springing curve of the neck contradicted that; and the symmetry of the face defied analysis. It was turned a little to one side, wistfully; the pose and the expression suited each other perfectly.

"*Full of soul!*" responded Miss Kimpsey. "She takes awfully well, doesn't she? It reminds me—it reminds me of pictures I've seen of Rachel, the actress. Really it does."

"I'm afraid Elfrida has no talent *that* way." Mrs. Bell's accent was quite one of regret.

"She seems completely wrapped up in her painting just now," said Miss Kimpsey, with her eyes still on the photograph.

"Yes. I often wonder what her career will be, and sometimes it comes home to me that it *must* be art. The child can't help it—she gets it straight from me. But there were no art classes in my day." Mrs. Bell's tone implied a large measure of what the world had lost in consequence. "Mr. Bell doesn't agree with me about Elfrida's being predestined for art," she went on, smiling; "his whole idea is that she'll marry, like other people."

"Well, if she goes on improving in looks at the rate she has, you'll find it difficult to *prevent*, I should think, Mrs. Bell." Miss Kimpsey began to wonder at her own temerity in staying so long. "Should you be opposed to it?"

"Oh, I shouldn't be *opposed* to it exactly. I won't say I don't expect it. I think she might do better, myself; but I dare say matrimony will swallow her up, as it does everybody — almost everybody — else." A

finer ear than Miss Kimpsey's might have heard in this that to overcome Mrs. Bell's objections matrimony must take a very attractive form indeed, and that she had no doubt it would. Elfrida's instructress did not hear it: she might have been less overcome with the quality of these latter-day sentiments if she had. Little Miss Kimpsey, whom matrimony had not swallowed up, had risen to go.

"Oh, I'm sure the most gifted couldn't do better!" she said hardily in departing, with a blush that turned her from buff and grey to brick colour.

Mrs. Bell picked up the *Revue* after she had gone, and read three lines of a paper on the climate and the soil of Poland. Then she laid it down again at the same angle with the corner of the table which it had described before.

"Rousseau!" she said aloud to herself, "C'est un peu fort, mais"—and paused, probably for maturer reflection upon the end of her sentence.

CHAPTER II.

“LESLIE,” said Mrs. Bell, making the unnecessary feminine twist to get a view of her back hair from the mirror with a hand-glass, “aren’t you *delighted*? Try to be candid with yourself now, and own that she’s tremendously improved.”

It would not have occurred to anybody but Mrs. Bell to ask Mr. Leslie Bell to be candid with himself. Candour was written in large letters all over Mr. Leslie Bell’s plain, broad countenance. So was a certain obstinacy, not of will, but adherence to prescribed principles, which might very well have been the result of living for twenty years with Mrs. Leslie Bell. Otherwise he was a thick-set man with an intelligent bald head, a fresh-coloured complexion, and a well-trimmed grey beard. Mr. Leslie Bell

looked at life with logic, or thought he did, and took it with ease, in a plain way. He was known to be a good man of business, with a leaning toward generosity, and much independence of opinion. It was not a custom among election candidates to ask Leslie Bell for his vote. It was pretty well understood that nothing would influence it except his own "views," and that none of the ordinary considerations in use with refractory electors would influence his views. He was a man of large undemonstrative affections, and it was a matter of private regret with him that there should have been only one child, and that a daughter, to bestow them upon. His simplicity of nature was utterly beyond the understanding of his wife, who had been building one elaborate theory after another about him ever since they had been married, conducting herself in mysterious accordance, but had arrived accurately only at the fact that he preferred two lumps of sugar in his tea.

Mr. Bell did not allow his attention to be

taken from the intricacies of his toilet by his wife's question until she repeated it.

"Aren't you charmed with Elfrida, Leslie? Hasn't Philadelphia improved her beyond your wildest dreams?"

Mr. Bell reflected. "You know I don't think Elfrida has ever been as pretty as she was when she was five years old, Maggie."

"Do say 'Margaret,'" interposed Mrs. Bell, plaintively. She had been suffering from this for twenty years.

"It's of no use, my dear; I never remember unless there's company present. I was going to say Elfrida had certainly grown. She's got to her full size now, I should think; and she dwarfs you, moth—Margaret."

Mrs. Bell looked at him with tragic eyes. "Do you see no more in her than that?" she exclaimed.

"She look well, I admit she looks well. She seems to have got a kind of style in Philadelphia."

"Style!"

"I don't mean fashionable style—a style of her own; and according to the professors,

neither the time nor the money has been wasted. But she's been a long year away, Maggie. It's been considerably dull without her for you and me. I hope she won't take it into her head to want to leave home again."

"If it should be necessary to her plan of life——"

"It won't be necessary. She's nineteen now, and I'd like to see her settle down here in Sparta, and the sooner the better. Her painting will be an interest for her all her life, and if ever she should be badly off she can teach. That was my idea in giving her the training."

"Settle down in Sparta!" Mrs. Bell repeated, with a significant curve of her superior lip. "Why, who is there——"

"Lots of people, though it isn't for me to name them, nor for you either, my dear. But speaking generally, there isn't a town of its size in the Union with a finer crop of go-ahead young men in it than Sparta."

Mrs. Bell was leaning against the inside shutter of their bedroom window, looking out while she waited for her husband. As

she looked, one of Sparta's go-ahead young men, glancing up as he passed in the street below and seeing her there behind the panes, raised his hat.

"Heavens, *no!*" said Mrs. Bell. "You don't understand, Leslie."

"Perhaps not," Mr. Bell returned. "We must get that packing-case opened after dinner. I'm anxious to see the pictures." Mr. Bell put the finishing touches to his little finger-nail and briskly pocketed his penknife. "Shall we go downstairs now?" he suggested. "Fix your brooch, mother; it's just on the drop."

Elfrida Bell had been a long year away, a year that seemed longer to her than it possibly could to anybody in Sparta, as she privately reflected when her father made this observation for the second and the third time. Sparta accounted for its days chiefly in ledgers, the girl thought: there was a rising and a going down of the sun, a little eating and drinking and speedy sleeping, a little discussion of the newspapers. Sparta got over its days by strides and stretches,

and the strides and stretches seemed afterwards to have been made over gaps and gulfs, full of emptiness. The year divided itself and got its painted leaves, its white silences, its rounding buds, and its warm fragrances from the winds of heaven; and so there were four seasons in Sparta, and people talked of an early spring or a late fall: but Elfrida told herself that time had no other division and the days no other colour. Elfrida seemed to be unaware of the opening of the new South Ward Episcopal Methodist Church. She overlooked the municipal elections, too, the plan for overhauling the town water-works, and the reorganization of the public library. She even forgot the Browning Club.

Whereas—though Elfrida would never have said “whereas”—the days in Philadelphia had been long and full. She had often lived a week in one of them, and there had been hours that stretched themselves over an infinity of life and feeling, as Elfrida saw it, looking back. In reality her experience had been usual enough and

poor enough, but it had fed her in a way, and she enriched it with her imagination and thought with keen and sincere pity that she had been starved till then. The question that preoccupied her when she moved out of the Philadelphia station in the Chicago train was that of future sustenance. It was under the surface of her thoughts when she kissed her father and mother, and was made welcome home; it raised a mute remonstrance against Mr. Bell's cheerful prophecy that she would be content to stay in Sparta for a while now, and get to know the young society; it neutralized the pleasure of the triumphs in the packing-box. Besides, their real delight had all been exhaled at the students' exhibition in Philadelphia, when Philadelphia looked at them. The opinion of Sparta, Elfrida thought, was not a matter for anxiety. Sparta would be pleased in advance.

Elfrida allowed one extenuating point in her indictment of Sparta. The place had produced her, as she was at eighteen, when they sent her to Philadelphia. This was only

half-conscious—she was able to formulate it later—but it influenced her sincere and vigorous disdain of the town correctively, and we may believe that it operated to except her father and mother from the general wreck of her opinion to a greater extent than any more ordinary feeling did. It was not in the least a sentiment of affection for her birth-place: if she could have chosen, she would very much have preferred to be born somewhere else. It was simply an important qualifying circumstance. Her actual and her ideal self, her most mysterious and interesting self, had originated in the air and the opportunities of Sparta; Sparta had even done her the service of showing her that she was unusual, by contrast, and Elfrida thought that she ought to be thankful to somebody or something for being as unusual as she was. She had had a comfortable, spoilt feeling of gratitude for it before she went to Philadelphia, which had developed in the mean time into a shudder at the mere thought of what it meant to be an ordinary person. “I could bear not to be

charming," said she sometimes, to her Philadelphia looking-glass, "but I could not bear not to be clever." She said "clever," but she meant more than that.

Elfrida Bell believed that something other than cleverness entered into her personal equation. She looked sometimes into her very soul to see what, but the writing there was in strange characters that faded under her eyes, leaving her uncomprehending, but tranced. Meanwhile, art spoke to her from all sides, finding her responsive and more responsive. Some books, some pictures, some music brought her a curious exalted sense of double life. She could not talk about it at all, but she could slip out into the wet streets on a gusty October evening, and walk miles exulting in it, and in the light on the puddles and in the rain on her face, coming back, it must be admitted, with red cheeks and an excellent appetite. It led her into strange absent silences and ways of liking to be alone, which gratified her mother and worried her father. When Elfrida burned

the gas of Sparta late in her own room, it was always her father who saw the light under the door, and who came and knocked and told her it was after eleven and high time she was in bed. Mrs. Bell usually protested. "How can the child reach any true development," she asked, "if you interfere with her like this?" To which Mr. Bell usually replied that whatever she developed, he didn't want it to be headaches and hysteria. Elfrida invariably answered, "Yes, papa," with complete docility; but it must be said that Mr. Bell generally knocked in vain, and the more perfect the submission of the daughterly reply, the later the gas would be apt to burn. Elfrida was always agreeable to her father. So far as she thought of it, she was appreciatively fond of him; but the relation pleased her, it was one that could be so charmingly sustained. For already out of the other world she walked in, the world of strange kinships and insights and recognitions, where she saw truth afar off and worshipped, and as often met falsehood in the way and turned raptly to follow, the

girl had drawn a vague and many-shaped idea of artistic living which embraced the filial attitude among others less explicable. It gave her pleasure to do certain things in certain ways. She stood and sat and spoke, and even thought, at times, with a subtle approval and enjoyment of her manner of doing it. It was not actual artistic achievement, but it was the sort of thing that entered her imagination as such achievement's natural corollary. Her self-consciousness was a supreme fact of her personality—it began earlier than any date she could remember, and it was a channel of the most unfailing and intense satisfaction to her from many sources. One was her beauty, for she had developed an elusive beauty that served her moods. When she was dull she called herself ugly—unfairly, though her face lost tremendously in value then,—and her general dislike of dulness and ugliness became particular and acute in connection with herself. It is not too much to say that she took a keen enjoying pleasure in the flush upon her own cheek and the light in her own eyes, no

less than in the inward sparkle that provoked it,—an honest delight, she would not have minded confessing it. Her height, her symmetry, her perfect abounding health were separate joys to her; she found absorbing and critical interest in the very figment of her being. It was entirely preposterous that a young woman should kneel at an attic window in a flood of spring moonlight, with her hair about the shoulders of her night-gown, repeating Rossetti to the wakeful budding garden, especially as it was for herself she did it, nobody else saw her. She knelt there partly because of vague desire to taste the essence of the spring and the garden and Rossetti at once, and partly because she felt the romance of the foolish situation. She knew of the shadow her hair made round her throat, and that her eyes were glorious in the moonlight. Going back to bed, she paused before the looking-glass, and wafted a kiss, as she blew the candle out, to the face she saw there. It was such a pretty face, and so full of the spirit of Rossetti and the moonlight

that she couldn't help it. Then she slept, dreamlessly, comfortably, and late; and in the morning she had never taken cold.

Philadelphia had pointed and sharpened all this. The girl's training there had vitalized her brooding dreams of producing what she worshipped, had given shape and direction to her informal efforts, had concentrated them upon charcoal and canvas. There was an enthusiasm for work in the Institute, a canonization of names, a blazing desire to imitate that tried hard to fan itself into originality. Elfrida kindled at once, and felt that her soul had lodged for ever in her fingers, that art had found for her, once for all, a sacred embodiment. She spoke with subdued feeling of its other shapes, she was at all points sympathetic; but she was no longer at all points desirous. Her aim was taken. She would not write novels, or compose operas: she would paint. There was some renunciation in it, and some humility. The day she came home, looking over a dainty sandal-wood box full of early verses twice locked against her mother's eye,

“The desire of the moth for the star!” she said to herself; but she did not tear them up. That would have been brutal.

Elfrida wanted to put off opening the case that held her year’s work until next day. She quailed somewhat in anticipation of her parents’ criticisms, as a matter of fact; she would have preferred to postpone parrying them. She acknowledged this to herself with a little irritation that it should be so; but when her father insisted, chisel in hand, she went down on her knees with charming willingness to help him. Mrs. Bell took a seat on the sofa, and clasped her hands with the expression of one who prepares for prayer.

One by one Mr. Leslie Bell drew out his daughter’s studies and copies, cutting their strings, clearing them of their paper wrappings, and standing each separately against the wall in his crisp businesslike way. They were all mounted and framed, they stood very well against the wall; but Mr. Bell, who began hopefully, was presently obliged to try to hide his disappointment,

the row was so persistently black and white. Mrs. Bell, on the sofa, had the look of postponing her devotions.

“ You seem to have done a great many of these—etchings,” said Mr. Bell.

“ Oh, papa ! They’re not etchings ; they’re subjects in charcoal—from casts and things.”

“ They do you credit—I’ve no doubt they do you credit. They’re very nicely drawn,” returned her father ; “ but they’re a good deal alike. We won’t be able to hang more than two of them in the same room. Was that what they gave you the medal for ? ”

Mr. Bell indicated a drawing of Psyche. The lines were delicate, expressive, and false ; the relief was imperfect, yet the feeling was undeniably caught. As a drawing it was incorrect enough, but its charm lay in a subtle spiritual something that had worked into it from the girl’s own fingers and made the beautiful empty classic face modernly interesting. In view of its inaccuracy the committee had been guilty of a most irregular proceeding in recognizing it with a medal,

but in a very young art school this might be condoned.

“It’s a perfectly lovely thing,” interposed Mrs. Bell, from the sofa. “I’m sure it deserves one.”

Elfrida said nothing. The study was ticketed; it had obviously won a medal.

Mr. Bell looked at it critically. “Yes, it’s certainly well done. In spite of the frame—I wouldn’t give ten cents for the frame—the effect is fine. We must find a good light for that. Oh, now we come to the oil paintings. We both presumed you would do well at the oil paintings, and, for my part,” continued Mr. Bell, definitely, “I like them best. There’s more variety in them.” He was holding at arm’s length, as he spoke, an oblong scrap of filmy blue sky and marshy green fields, in a preposterously wide flat dull gold frame, and looking at it in a puzzled way. Presently he reversed it, and looked again.

“No, papa,” Elfrida said; “you had it right side up before.” She was biting her lip, and struggling with the desire to pile

them all back into the box and shut the lid, and stand on it.

"That's exquisite!" murmured Mrs. Bell, when Mr. Bell had righted it again.

"It's one of the worst," said Elfrida briefly.

Mr. Bell looked relieved. "Since that's your own opinion, Elfrida," he said, "I don't mind saying that I do not care much about it either. It looks as if you'd got tired of it before you finished it."

"Does it?" Elfrida said.

"Now this is a much better thing, in my opinion," her father went on, standing the picture of an old woman behind an apple-stall along the wall with the rest. "I don't pretend to be a judge, but I know what I like, and I like that. It explains itself."

"It's a lovely bit of colour," remarked Mrs. Bell.

Elfrida smiled. "Thank you, mamma," she said, and kissed her.

When the box was exhausted, Mr. Bell walked up and down for a few minutes in front of the row against the wall, with his

hands in his pockets, reflecting, while Mrs. Bell discovered new beauties to the author of them.

“We’ll hang this lot in the dining-room,” he said at length, “and those black and whites with the oak mountings in the parlour—they’ll go best with the wall-paper there.”

“Yes, papa.”

“And I hope you won’t mind, Elfrida,” he added, “but I’ve promised that they should have one of your paintings to raffle off in the bazaar for the alterations in the Sunday School next week.”

“Oh no, papa. I shall be delighted.”

Elfrida was sitting beside her mother on the sofa, and, at the close of this proposition, Mr. Bell came and sat there too. There was silence for a moment while they all three confronted the line of pictures leaning against the wall. Then Elfrida began to laugh, and she went on laughing, to the astonishment of her parents, until the tears came into her eyes. She stopped as suddenly, kissed her mother and father, and went upstairs.

“I’m afraid you’ve hurt her feelings, Leslie,” said Mrs. Bell, when she had well gone.

But Elfrida’s feelings had not been hurt, though one might say that the evening left her sense of humour rather sore. At that moment she was dallying with the temptation to describe the whole scene in a letter to a valued friend in Philadelphia, who would have appreciated it with mirth. In the end she did not write. It would have been too humiliating.

CHAPTER III.

“PAS mal parbleu !” Lucien remarked with pursed-out lips, running his fingers through his shock of coarse hair and reflectively scratching the top of his big head as he stepped closer to Nádíe Palicsky’s elbow, where she stood at her easel, in his crowded atelier. The girl turned and looked keenly into his face, seeking his eyes, which were on her work with a considering interested look. Satisfied, she sent a glance of joyous triumph at a somewhat older woman whose place was next, and who was listening with the amiable effacement of countenance that is sometimes a more or less successful disguise for chagrin. On this occasion it seemed to fail, for Mademoiselle Palicsky turned her attention to Lucien and her work again with a slight raising of the eyebrows and a slighter sigh.

Her face assumed a gentle melancholy, as if she were pained at the exhibition of a weakness of her sex, yet it was unnecessary to be an acute observer to read there the hope that Lucien's significant phrase had not by any chance escaped her neighbour.

"The drawing of the neck," Lucien went on, "is excellently brutal." Nádíe wished he would speak a little louder, but Lucien always arranged the carrying power of his voice according to the susceptibilities of the atelier. He thrust his hands into his pockets, and still stood beside her, looking at her study of the nude model who posed upon a table in the midst of the students. "In you, mademoiselle," he added, in a tone yet lower, "I find the woman and the artist divorced. That is a vast advantage—an immense source of power. I am growing more certain of you—you are not merely cleverly eccentric, as I thought. You have a great deal that no one can teach you. You have finished that. I wish to take it downstairs to show to the men. It will not be jeered at, I promise you."

“ Cher maître ! You mean it ? ”

“ But certainly ! ”

The girl handed him the study with a look of almost doglike gratitude in her narrow grey eyes. Lucien had never said so much to her before, though the whole atelier had noticed how often he had been coming to her easel lately, and had disparaged her in corners accordingly. She looked at the tiny silver watch she wore in a leather strap on her left wrist—he had spent nearly five minutes with her this time, watching her work and talking to her,—in itself a triumph. It was almost four o'clock, and the winter daylight was going; presently they would all stop work. Partly for the pleasure of being chaffed and envied and complimented in the anteroom in the general washing of brushes, and partly to watch Lucien's rapid progress among the remaining easels, Mademoiselle Palicky deliberately sat down in a prematurely vacant chair, swung one slender little limb over the other, and waited. As she sat there a generous thought rose above her exultation.

She hoped everybody else in the atelier had guessed what Lucien was saying to her all that while, and had seen him carry off her day's work—but not the little American. The little American, who was at least thirteen inches taller than Mademoiselle Palicsky, was sufficiently discouraged already, and it was pathetic, in view of almost a year of failure, to see how she clung to her ghost of a talent. Besides, the little American admired Nádíe Palicsky, her friend, her comrade, quite enough already.

Elfrida had heard, nevertheless. She listened eagerly, tensely, as she always did when Lucien opened his lips in her neighbourhood. When she saw him take the sketch to show in the men's atelier downstairs, to exhibit to that horde of animals below whose studies and sketches and compositions were so constantly brought up for the stimulus and instruction of Lucien's women students, she grew suddenly so white that the girl who worked next her, a straw-coloured Swede, asked her if she were ill, and offered her a little green bottle of salts of

lavender. "It's that beast of a calorifère," the Swede said, nodding at the hideous black cylinder that stood near them; "they will always make it too hot."

Elfrida waved the salts back hastily; Lucien was coming her way. She worked seated, and as he seemed on the point of passing with merely a casual glance and an ambiguous "H'm!" she started up. The movement effectually arrested him, unintentional though it seemed. He frowned slightly, thrusting his hands deep into his coat pockets, and looked again.

"We must find a better place for you, mademoiselle; you can make nothing of it here, so close to the model, and below him thus." He would have gone on, but, in spite of his intention to avert his eyes, he caught the girl's glance, and something infinitely appealing in it stayed him again. "Mademoiselle," he said, with visible irritation, "there is nothing to say that I have not said many times already! Your drawing is still lady-like, your colour is still pretty, and *sapristi!* you have worked with me a year!

Still," he added, recollecting himself—Lucien never lost a student by over-candour—"considering your difficult place, the shoulders are not so bad. *Continuez, mademoiselle.*"

The girl's eyes were fastened immovably upon her work, as she sat down again, painting rapidly in an ineffectual meaningless way, with the merest touch of colour in her brush. Her face glowed with the deepest shame that had ever visited her. Lucien was scolding the Swede soundly; she had disappointed him, he said. Elfrida felt heavily how impossible it was that she should disappoint him. And they had all heard, the English girl in the South Kensington gown, the rich New Yorker, Nádie's rival the Roumanian, Nádie herself; and they were all, except the last, working more vigorously for hearing. Nádie had turned her head away, and so far as the back of a neck and the tips of two ears could express oblivion of what had passed, it might have been gathered from hers. But Elfrida knew better, and she resented the pity of the pretence more than if she had met Mademoiselle

Palicsky's long light grey eyes full of derisive laughter.

For a year she had been in it and of it, that intoxicating life of the Quartier Latin. So much in it that she had gladly forgotten any former one; so much of it that it had become treason to believe existence supportable under any other conditions. It was her pride that she had felt everything from the beginning; her instinctive apprehension of all that is to be apprehended in the passionate fantastic vivid life on the left side of the Seine had been a conscious joy from the day she had taken her tiny apartment in the Rue Porte Royale, and bought her colours and sketching-block from a dwarf-like little dealer in the next street, who assured her proudly that he supplied Henner and Dagnan-Bouveret, and moreover knew precisely what she wanted from experience. "Moi aussi, mademoiselle, je suis artiste!" She had learnt nothing, she had absorbed everything. It seemed to her that she had entered into her inheritance, and that in the possessions that throng the Quartier Latin

she was born to be rich. In thinking this, she had an overpowering realization of the poverty of Sparta—so convincing that she found it unnecessary to tell herself that she would never go back there. That was the unconscious pivotal supposition in everything she thought, or said, or did. After the first bewildering day or two, when the exquisite thrill of Paris captured her indefinitely, she felt the full tide of her life turn and flow steadily in a new direction, with a delight of revelation and an ecstasy of promise that made nothing in its sweep of every emotion that had not its birth and growth in art, and forbade the mere consideration of anything that might be an obstacle, as if it were a sin. She entered her new world with proud recognition of its unwritten laws, its unsanctified morale, its riotous overflowing ideals; and she was instant in gathering that to see, to comprehend these was to be thrice blessed, as not to see, not to comprehend them was to dwell in outer darkness with the bourgeois, and the “sand-paper” artists, and others

who are without hope. It gave her moments of pure delight to reflect how little "the people" suspected the reality of the existence of such a world, notwithstanding all they read and all they professed, and how absolutely exclusive it was in the very nature of nature. How it had its own language untranslatable, its own creed unbelievable, its own customs unfathomable by outsiders, and yet among the true-born how divinely simple recognition was! Her allegiance had the loyalty of every fibre of her being; her scorn of the world she had left was too honest to permit any posing in that regard. The life at Sparta assumed the colours and very much the significance depicted on a bit of faded tapestry; when she thought of it, it was to groan that so many of her young impressionable years had been wasted there. She hoarded her years, now that every day and every hour was suffused with its individual pleasure, or interest, or that keen artistic pain which also had its value, as a sensation, in the Quartier Latin. It distressed her to think that she was almost twenty-one.

The interminable year that intervened between Elfrida's return from Philadelphia and her triumph in the matter of being allowed to go to Paris to study, she had devoted mainly to the society of the Swiss governess in the Sparta Seminary for young ladies—Methodist Episcopal,—with the successful object of getting a working knowledge of French. There had been a certain amount of "young society" too, and one or two incipient love affairs, watched with anxious interest by her father, and with a harrowed conscience by her mother, who knew Elfrida's capacity for amusing herself; and unlimited opportunities had occurred for the tacit exhibition of her superiority to Sparta, of which she had not always taken advantage. But the significance of the year gathered into the French lessons; it was by virtue of these that the time had a place in her memory. Mademoiselle Joubert supplemented her instruction with a violent affection, a great deal of her society, and the most entertainingly modern of the French novels which Brentano sent her monthly

in enticing packets—her single indulgence. So that, after the first confusion of a multitude of tongues in the irrelevant Parisian key, Elfrida found herself reasonably fluent and fairly at ease. The illumined jargon of the atelier stayed with her naturally—she never forgot a word or a phrase; and in two months she was babbling and mocking with the rest,

She lived alone—she learnt readily to do it on eighty francs a month,—and her *appartement* became charming in three weeks. She divined what she should have there, and she managed to get extraordinary bargains in mystery and history out of the dealers in such things, so cracked and so rusty, so moth-eaten, and of such excellent colour, that the escape of the combined effect from *banalité* was a marvel. She had a short sharp struggle with her American taste for simple elegance in dress, and overthrew it, aiming, with some success, at originality instead. She found it easy, in Paris, to invest her striking personality in a distinctive costume, sufficiently becoming and

sufficiently odd, of which a broad soft felt hat, which made a delightful brigand of her, and a Hungarian cloak formed important features. The Hungarian cloak suited her so extremely well that artistic considerations compelled her to wear it occasionally, I fear, when other people would have found it uncomfortably warm.

In nothing that she said or did, admired or condemned, was there any trace of the commonplace, except, perhaps, the desire to avoid it. It had become her conviction that she owed this to herself. She was thoroughly popular in the atelier; her *petits soupers* were so good, her enthusiasms so generous, her drawing so bad. The other pupils declared that she had a head "*divinement tragique*," and for those of them she liked she sometimes posed, filling impressive parts in their weekly compositions. They all knew the little apartment in the Rue Porte Royale, more or less well according to the favour with which they were received. Nádie Palicsky, perhaps, knew it best,—Nádie Palicsky and

her friend Monsieur André Vambéry, who always accompanied her when she came to Elfrida's in the evening, finding it impossible to allow her to be out alone at night, which Nádíe confessed agreeable to her vanity but a bore.

Elfrida found it difficult, in the beginning, to admire the friend. He was too small for dignity, and Mademoiselle Palicsky's inspired comparison of his long black hair to "*serpents noirs*" left her unimpressed. Moreover she thought she detected about him a personal odour which was neither that of sanctity nor any other abstraction. It took time and conversation, and some acquaintance with values as they obtain at the École des Beaux Arts, and the knowledge of what it meant to be "selling," to lift Monsieur Vambéry to his proper place in her regard. After that she blushed that he had ever held any other. But from the first Elfrida had been conscious of a kind of pride in her unshrinking acceptance of the situation. She and Nádíe had exchanged a pledge of some sort, when Mademoiselle

Palicsky bethought herself of the unconfessed fact. She gave Elfrida a narrow look, and then leant back in her low chair, and bent an imperturbable gaze upon the slender spiral of the smoke that rose from the end of her cigarette. "It is necessary, now, that you should know, petite, nobody else does, Lucien would be sure to make a fuss; but—I have a lover, and we have decided about marriage that it is ridiculous. It is a *brave âme*—you ought to know André; but if it makes any difference——"

Elfrida reflected afterwards with satisfaction, that she had not even changed colour, though she had found the communication electric. It seemed to her that there had been something dignified, noble almost in the answer she had made, with a smile that acknowledged the fact that the world had scruples on such accounts as these, "*Cela m'est absolument égal.*"

So far as the life went it was perfect. The Quartier spoke and her soul answered it; and the world had nothing to compare with a conversation like that. But the question of

production, of achievement, was beginning to bring her moments when she had a terrible sensation that the temperature of her passion was chilled. She had not yet seen despair, but she had now and then lost her hold of herself, and she had made acquaintance with fear. There had been no vivid realization of failure, but a problem was beginning to form in her mind, and with it a distinct terror of the solution which sometimes found a shape in her dreams. In waking, voluntary moments she would see her problem only as an unanswerable enigma. Yet in the beginning she had felt a splendid confidence. Her appropriation of theory had been so brilliant and so rapid, her instinctive appreciation had helped itself out so well with the casual formulas of the schools, she seemed to herself to have an absolute understanding of expression. She held her social place among the others by her power of perception, and that, with the completeness of her repudiation of the bourgeois, had given her Nádie Palicky, whom the rest found difficult, variable, unreasonable. Elfrida was certain that if she

might only talk to Lucien she could persuade him of a great deal about her talent that escaped him—she was sure it escaped him—in the mere examination of her work. It chafed her always that her personality could not touch the master, that she must day after day be only the dumb submissive pupil. She felt sometimes that there were things she might say to Lucien which would be interesting and valuable for him to hear.

Lucien was always non-committal for the first few months. Everybody said so, and it was natural enough. Elfrida set her teeth against his silences, his casual looks and ambiguous encouragements, for a length of time which did infinite credit to her determination. She felt herself capable of an eternity of pain; she was proudly conscious of a willingness to oppose herself to innumerable discouragements, to back her talent, as it were, against all odds. That was historic, dignified, to be expected! But in the inmost privacy of her soul she had conceived the character of the obstacles she was prepared to face, and the list resolutely excluded any

idea that it might not be worth while. Indifference and contempt cut at the very roots of her pledges to herself. As she sat listening on this afternoon to the vivid terms of Lucien's disapproval of what the Swede had done, she had a sharp consciousness of this severance.

She had nothing to say to any one in the general babble of the anteroom, and nobody noticed her white face and resolute eyes particularly—the Americans were always so pale and so *exalté*. Nádie kept away from her. Elfrida had to cross the room and bring her, with a little touch of angry assertion upon the arm, from the middle of the group she had drawn around her, on purpose as her friend knew.

“I want you to dine with me—really dine,” she said, and her voice was both eager and repressed. “We will go to Babaudin's; one gets an excellent haricot there, and you shall have that little white cheese that you love. Come! I want you particularly. I will even make him bring champagne—anything!”

. Nádie gave her a quick look, and made a little theatrical gesture of delight. "Quel bonheur!" she cried for the benefit of the others; and then, in a lower tone, "But not Babaudin's, petite! André will not permit Babaudin's; he says it is not *convenable*." And she threw up her eyes with mock resignation. "Say Papaud's. They keep their feet off the table at Papaud's: there are fewer of those *bêtes des Anglais*."

"Papaud's is cheaper," Elfrida returned darkly. "The few English who dine at Babaudin's behave perfectly well. I will not be insulted about the cost. I'll be answerable to André. You don't lie as a general thing. And why now! I can afford it, truly. You need not be distressed."

Mademoiselle Palicsky looked into the girl's tense face for an instant, and laughed a gay assent. But to herself she said, as she finished drying her brushes on an inconceivably dirty bit of cotton, "She has found herself out—she has come to the truth. She has discovered that it is not in her, and she is coming to me for corroboration. Well, I

will not give it, me. It is extremely disagreeable, and I have not the courage. *Pourquoi donc!* I will send her to Monsieur John Kendal—she may make him responsible. He will break her, but he will not lie to her; they sacrifice all to their consciences, those English! And now, you good-natured fool, you are in for a devil of an evening!”

CHAPTER IV.

“THREE months more,” Elfrida Bell said to herself next morning, in the act of boiling an egg over a tiny kerosene stove in the cupboard that served her as a kitchen, “and I will put it to every test I know. Three unflinching months! John Kendal will not have gone back to England by that time; I shall still get his opinion. If he is only as encouraging as Nádíe was last night, dear thing! I almost forgave her for being so much—much cleverer than I am. Oh, letters!” as a heavy knock repeated itself upon the door of the room outside.

There was only one; it was thrust beneath the door, showing a white triangle to her expectancy as she ran out to secure it, while the fourth flight creaked under Madame Vamousin descending. She picked it up with

a light heart. She was young and she had slept. Yesterday's strain had passed; she was ready to count yesterday's experience among the things that must be met. Nádíe had been so sensible about it. This was a letter from home, and the American mail was not due until next day. Inside there would be news of a little pleasure trip to New York which her father and mother had been planning lately—Elfrida constantly urged upon her parents the necessity of amusing themselves—and a remittance. The remittance would be more than usually welcome, for she was a little in debt—a mere trifle, fifty or sixty francs, but Elfrida hated being in debt. She tore the end of the envelope across with absolute satisfaction, which was only half chilled when she opened out each of the four closely written sheets of foreign letter paper in turn and saw that the usual postal order was not there.

Having ascertained this, however, she went back to her egg: in another ten seconds it would have been hard-boiled, a thing she detested. There was the egg, and

there was some apricot jam—the egg in a slender-stemmed Arabian silver cup, the jam golden in a little round dish of wonderful old blue. She set it forth with the milk the bread and the butter and the coffee, on a bit of much-mended damask, with a pattern of rosebuds and a coronet in one corner. Her breakfast gave her several sorts of pleasure.

Half an hour after it was over she was still sitting with the letter in her lap. It is possible to imagine that she looked ugly. Her dark eyes had a look of persistence in spite of fear, a line or two shot up from between her brows, her lips were pursed a little and drawn down at the corners, her chin thrust forward. Her face and her attitude helped each other to express the distinctest possible negative. Her neck had an obstinate bend. She leaned forward clasping her knees, for the moment a creature of rigid straight lines. She had hardly moved since she read the letter.

She was sorry to learn that her father had been unfortunate in business, that the Illinois Indubitable Insurance Company had failed.

At his age the blow would be severe, and the prospect, after a life of comparative luxury, of subsisting even in Sparta on eight hundred dollars a year could not be an inviting one for either of her parents. When she thought of their giving up the white-brick house in Columbia Avenue and going to live in Cox Street, Elfrida was thoroughly grieved. She felt the sincerest gratitude, however, that the misfortune had not come sooner, before she had learned the true significance of living, while yet it might have placed her in a state of blind irresolution which would probably have lasted indefinitely. After a year in Paris she was able to make up her mind, and this she could not congratulate herself upon sufficiently, since a decision at the moment was of such vital importance. For one point upon which Mrs. Leslie's letter insisted regretfully but strongly was that the next remittance, which they hoped to be able to send in a week or two, would necessarily be the last. It would be as large as they could make it, at all events it would amply cover her passage and

railway expenses to Sparta; and of course she would sail as soon as it reached her. It was an elaborate letter, written in phrases which Mrs. Leslie thought she evolved, but probably remembered from a long and comprehensive course of fiction, as appropriate to the occasion; and Elfrida read between the lines with some impatience how largely their trouble was softened to her mother by the consideration that it would inevitably bring her back to them. "We can bear it well if we bear it together," wrote Mrs. Bell. "You have always been our brave daughter, and your young courage will be invaluable to us now. Your talents will be our flowers by the wayside: we shall take the keenest possible delight in watching them expand, as, even under the cloud of financial adversity, we know they will."

"Dear over-confident parent," Elfrida reflected grimly at this point, "I must yet prove that I have any."

Along with the situation she studied elaborately the third page of the *Sparta Sentinel*. When it arrived months before,

containing the best part of a long letter describing Paris, which she had written to her mother in the first freshness of her delighted impressions, she had glanced over it with half-amused annoyance at the foolish parental pride that had suggested printing it. She was already too remote from the life of Sparta to care very much one way or the other, but such feeling as she had was of that sort. And the compliments from the minister, from various members of the Browning Club, from the editor himself, that filtered through her mother's letters during the next two or three weeks, made her shrug with their absolute irrelevance to the only praise that could thrill her and the only purpose she held dear. Even now, when the printed lines contained the significance of a possible resource, she did not give so much as a thought to the flattering opinion of Sparta, as her mother had conveyed it to her. She read them over and over, relying desperately on her own critical sense and her knowledge of what the Paris correspondent of the *Daily Dial* thought of

her chances in that direction. He, Frank Parke, had told her once, that if her brush failed, she had only to try her pen, though he made use of no such commonplace as that. He said it, too, at the end of half an hour's talk with her, only half an hour. Elfrida, when she wished to be exact with her vanity, told herself that it could not have been more than twenty-five minutes. She wished for particular reasons to be exact with it now, and she did not fail to give proper weight to the fact that Frank Parke had never seen her before that day. The Paris correspondent of the London *Daily Dial* was well enough known to be of the *monde*, and rich enough to be as bourgeois as anybody. Therefore the people who knew him thought it odd that at his age this gentleman should prefer the indelicacies of the Quartier to those of "tout Paris," and the bad vermouth and cheap cigars of the Luxemburg to the peculiarly excellent quality of champagne with which the President's wife made her social atonement to the Faubourg St. Germain. But it was so, and its being so

rendered Frank Parke's opinion that Miss Bell could write if she chose to try, not only supremely valuable to her, but available for the second time if necessary, which was perhaps more important.

There would be a little more money from Sparta, perhaps one hundred and fifty dollars. It would come in a week, and after that there would be none. But a supply of it, however modest, must be arranged somehow; there were the *frais* of the atelier, to speak of nothing else. The necessity was irritatingly absolute. Elfrida wished that her scruples were not so acute about arranging it by writing for the press. "If I could think for a moment that I had any right to it as a means of expression!" she reflected. "But I haven't—it is an art for others. And it is an art—as sacred as mine. I have no business to degrade it to my uses." Her mental position when she went to see Frank Parke was a cynical compromise with her artistic conscience, of which she nevertheless regretted the necessity.

The correspondent of the *Daily Dial* had a club for one side of the river, and a café for the other. He dined oftenest at the café, and Elfrida's card, with "urgent" inscribed in pencil on it, was brought to him that evening as he was finishing his coffee. She had no difficulty in getting it taken in. Mr. Parke's theory was that a newspaper man gained more than he lost by accessibility. He came out immediately, furtively returning a toothpick to his waistcoat pocket, a bald stout gentleman of middle age, dressed in loose grey clothes, with shrewd eyes, a nose which his benevolence just saved from being hawk-like, a bristling white moustache, and a pink double chin. It rather pleased Frank Parke, who was born in Hammersmith, to be so constantly taken for an American, presumably a New Yorker.

"Monsieur——" began Elfrida, a little formally. She would not have gone on in French, but it was her way to use this form with the men she knew in Paris, irrespective of their nationality, just as she

invariably addressed letters which were to be delivered in Sparta, Illinois, "à madame Leslie Bell, Avenue Columbia" of that municipality.

"Miss Elfrida, I am delighted to see you," he interrupted her, stretching out one hand and looking at his watch with the other. "I am fortunate in having fifteen whole minutes to put at your disposal. At the end of that time I have an appointment with a Cabinet Minister who would rather see the devil. So I must be punctual. Shall we walk a bit along these dear boulevards, or shall I get a fiacre? No? You're quite right; Paris was made for eternal walking. Now, what is it, my dear child?"

Mr. Parke had already concluded that it was money, and had fixed the amount he would lend. It was just half of what Mademoiselle Knike of Paolo Rossi's had succeeded in extracting from him last week. He liked having a reputation for amiability among the ateliers, but he must not let it cost too much.

Elfrida felt none of that benumbing shame

which sometimes seizes those who would try literature confessing to those who have succeeded in it, and the occasion was too important for the decorative diffidence that might have occurred to her if it had been trivial. She had herself well gathered together, and she would have been concise and direct, even if there had been more than fifteen minutes.

“One afternoon last September at Nádie Palicsky’s—there is no chance that you will remember, but I assure you it is so—you told me that I might, if I tried—write, monsieur.”

The concentration of Miss Bell’s purpose in her voice made itself felt where Frank Parke kept his acuter perceptions, and put them at her service.

“I remember perfectly,” he said.

“*Je m’en félicite.* It is more than I expected. Well, circumstances have made it so that I must either write or scrub. Scrubbing spoils one’s hands, and, besides, it isn’t sufficiently remunerative. So I have come to ask you whether you seriously

thought so, or whether it was only politeness—*blague*, or what. I know it is horrible of me to insist like this, but you see I must." Her big dark eyes looked at him without a shadow of appeal, rather as if he were destiny and she were unafraid.

"Oh, I meant it," he returned ponderingly. "You can often tell by the way people talk that they would write well. But there are many things to be considered, you know."

"Oh, I know—whether one has any real right to write, anything to say that makes it worth while. I am afraid I can't find that I have. But there must be scullery-maid's work in literature—in journalism, isn't there? I could do that, I thought. After all, it's only one's own art that one need keep sacred." She added the last sentence a little defiantly.

But the correspondent of the *Daily Dial* was not thinking of that aspect of the matter.

"It's not a thing you can jump into," he said shortly. "Have you written anything, anywhere, for the press before?"

“Only one or two things that have appeared in the local paper at home. They were more or less admired by the people there, so far as that goes.”

“Were you paid for them?”

Elfrida shook her head. “I’ve often heard the editor say he paid for nothing but his telegrams,” she said.

“There it is, you see.”

“I want to write for *Raffini’s Chronicle*,” Elfrida said quickly. “You know the editor of *Raffini*, of course, Mr. Parke. You know everybody. Will you do me the very great favour to tell him that I will report society functions for him at one-half the price he is accustomed to pay for such writing, and do it more entertainingly?”

Frank Parke smiled. “You are courageous, indeed, Miss Elfrida. That is done by a woman who is invited everywhere in her proper person, and knows ‘tout Paris’ like her alphabet. I believe she holds stock in *Raffini*; any way, they would double her pay rather than lose her. You would have more chance of ousting their leader-writer.”

"I should be sorry to oust anybody," Elfrida returned with dignity.

"How do you propose to help it, if you go in for doing better or cheaper what somebody else has been doing before?"

Miss Bell thought for a minute, and demonstrated her irresponsibility with a little shrug.

"Then I am very sorry," she said; "but, monsieur, you haven't told me what to do."

The illuminator of European politics for the *Daily Dial* wished heartily that it had been a matter of two or three hundred francs.

"I'm afraid I—well, I don't see how I can give you any very definite advice. The situation doesn't admit of it, Miss Bell. But—have you given up Lucien?"

"No, it is only that—that I must earn money to pay him."

"Oh! Home supplies stopped?"

"My people have lost all their money except barely enough to live on. I can't expect another sou."

"That's hard lines."

"I'm awfully sorry for them. But it isn't

enough being sorry, you know. I must do something. I thought I might write for *Raffini* for—for practice, you know; the articles they print are really very bad,—and afterwards arrange to send Paris letters to some of the big American newspapers. I know a woman who does it. I assure you she is quite stupid, and she is paid—but enormously!”

Mr. Parke repressed his inclination to smile. “I believe that sort of thing over there is very much in the hands of the syndicates,” he said; “and they won’t look at you unless you are known. I don’t want to discourage you, Miss Bell, but it would take you at least a year to form a connection. You would have to learn Paris about five times as well as you fancy you know it already; and then you would require a special course of training to find out what to write about. And then, remember, you would have to compete with people who know every inch of the ground. Now, if I can be of any assistance to you *en camarade*, you know, in the matter of your passage home——”

“Thanks,” Elfrida interposed quickly, “I

am not going home. If I cannot write I can scrub, as I said. I must find out." She put out her hand. "I am sure there are not many of those fifteen minutes left," she said, smiling and quite undismayed. "I have to thank you very sincerely for—for sticking to the opinion you expressed when it was only a matter of theory. As soon as I justify it in practice I'll let you know."

The correspondent of the *Daily Dial* hesitated, looked at his watch and hesitated again.

"There's plenty of time," he fibbed, frowning over the problem of what might be done.

"Oh no," Elfrida said, "you are very kind, but there can't be. You will be very late, and perhaps his Excellency will have given the audience to the devil instead—or to Monsieur de Pommitz." Her eyes expressed perfect indifference.

Frank Parke laughed outright — de Pommitz was his rival for every political development, and shone dangerously in the telegraphic columns of the *London World*.

“De Pommitz isn’t in it this time,” he said. “I’ll tell you what I might do, Miss Elfrida. How long have you got for this—experiment?”

“Less than a week.”

“Well, go home and write me an article—something locally descriptive. Make it as bright as you can, and take a familiar subject. Let me have it in three days, and I’ll see if I can get it into *Raffini* for you. Of course you know I can’t promise that they’ll look at it.”

“You are very good,” Elfrida returned hastily, seeing his real anxiety to be off. “Something locally descriptive? I’ve often thought the atelier would make a good subject.”

“Capital—capital! Only be very careful about personalities and so forth. *Raffini* hates giving offence. Good-bye! Here, you! cocher! Boulevard Haussmann!”

CHAPTER V.

JOHN KENDAL had only one theory that was not received with respect by the men at Lucien's. They quoted it as often as other things he said, but always in a spirit of derision, while Kendal's ideas as a rule got themselves discussed seriously, now and then furiously.

This young man had been working in the atelier for three years, with marked success almost from the beginning. The first thing he did had a character and an importance that brought Lucien himself to admit a degree of soundness in the young fellow's earlier training, which was equal to great praise. Since then he had found the line in the most interesting room in the Palais d'Industrie, the Cours had twice medalled him, and Albert Wolff was beginning to talk

about his *coloration délicieuse*. Also it was known that he had condescended for none of these things. His success in Paris added piquancy to his preposterous notion that an Englishman should go home and paint England and hang his work in the Academy, and made it even more unreasonable than if he had failed.

“For me,” remarked André Vambéry, with a finely curled lip, “I never see an English landscape without thinking of what it would bring *par hectare*. It is *trop arrangé*, that country, all laid out in a pattern of hedges and clumps, for the pleasure of the milords. And every milord has the taste of every other milord! He will go home to perpetuate that!”

“Si, si, mais c’est pour sa patrie.”

Nádie defended him. Women always did.

“Bah!” returned her lover, “pour nous autres artistes la France c’est la patrie, et la France seule! Every day he is in England he will lose—lose—lose. *Enfin*, he will paint the portraits of the wives and daughters of Sir Brown and Sir Smith,

and he will do it as Sir Brown and Sir Smith advise ! Avec son talent unique, distinctive ! Oh, je suis à bout de patience ! ”

When Kendal's opinion materialized, and it became known that he meant to go back in February, and would send nothing to the Salon that year, the studio tore its hair and hugged its content, all but the master, who attempted to dissuade his pupil with literal tears, of which he did not seem in the least ashamed and which annoyed Kendal very much. In fact, it was a dramatic splash of Lucien's which happened to fall upon his coat-sleeve that decided Kendal finally about the impossibility of living always in Paris. He could not take life seriously where the emotions lent themselves so easily. And Kendal thought that he ought to take life seriously, because his natural tendency was otherwise. Kendal was an Englishman, with a temperament which multiplied his individuality. If his father, who was once in the Indian Staff Corps, had lived, Kendal would probably have gone into the Indian Staff Corps too. And if his mother,

who was of clerical stock, had not died about the same time, it is more than likely that she would have persuaded him to the Bar. With his parents, the obligation to be anything in particular seemed to Kendal to have been removed however, and he followed his inclination in the matter instead, which made him an artist. He would have found life too interesting to confine his observation of it within the scope of any profession, but of course he could have chosen none which presents it with greater fascination. To speak quite baldly about him, his intelligence and his sympathies had a wider range than is represented by any one power of expression, even the catholic brush. He had the analytical turn of the age, though it had been denied him to demonstrate what he saw except through an art which is sympathetic. With a more comprehensive conception of modern tendencies and a subtler descriptive vocabulary, Kendal might have divided his allegiance between Lucien and the magazines, and ended a light-handed fiction-maker of the more refined order of

realists. As it was, he made his studies for his own pleasure, and if the people he met ministered to him further than they knew, nothing came of it more than that. What he liked best to achieve was an intimate knowledge of his fellow-beings, from an outside point of view. Where intimate knowledge came of intimate association, he found that it usually compromised his independence of criticism, which in the Quartier Latin was a serious matter. So he rather cold-bloodedly aimed at keeping his own personality independent of his observation of other people's, and as a rule he succeeded.

That Paris had neither made Kendal nor marred him, may be gathered for the first part from his contentment to go back to paint in his native land, for the second from the fact that he had a relation with Elfrida Bell which at no point verged toward the sentimental. He would have found it difficult to explain in which direction it did verge; in fact, he would have been very much surprised to know that he sustained any relation at all toward Miss Bell important

enough to repay examination. The red-armed, white-capped proprietress of a crèmè-rie had effected their introduction by regretting to them jointly that she had only one helping of *compote de cerises* left, and leaving them to arrange its consumption between them. And it is safer than it would be in most similar cases to say that neither Elfrida's heavy-lidded beauty nor the smile that gave its instant attraction to Kendal's delicately eager face had much to do with the establishment of their acquaintance, such as it was. Kendal, though his virtue was not of the heroic order, would have turned a contemptuous heel upon any imputation of the sort, and Elfrida would have stared it calmly out of countenance.

To Elfrida it soon became a definite and agreeable fact that she and the flower of Lucien's had things to say to each other—things of the rare temperamental sort that say themselves seldom. Within a fortnight she had made a niche for him in that private place where she kept the images of those toward whom she sustained this peculiarly

sacred obligation, and to meet him had become one of those pleasures which were in Sparta so notably unattainable. I cannot say that considerations which, from the temperamental point of view, might be described as ulterior, had never suggested themselves to Miss Bell. She had thought of them, with a little smile, as a possible development on Kendal's part that might be amusing. And then she invariably checked the smile, and told herself that she would be sorry—very sorry. Instinctively she separated the artist and the man. For the artist she had an admiration none the less sincere for its exaggerations, and a sympathy which she thought the best of herself: for the man nothing, except the half-contemptuous reflection that he was probably as other men.

If Elfrida stamped herself less importantly upon the surface of Kendal's mind than he did upon hers, it may be easily enough accounted for by the multiplicity of images there before her. I do not mean to imply that all or many of these were feminine,

but, as I have indicated, Kendal was more occupied with impressions of all sorts than is the habit of his fellow-countrymen, and at twenty-eight he had managed to receive quite enough to make a certain seriousness necessary in a fresh one.

There was no seriousness in his impression of Elfrida. If he had gone so far as to trace its lines he would have found them to indicate a more than slightly fantastic young woman, with an appreciation of certain artistic verities out of all proportion to her power to attain them. But he had not gone so far. His encounters with her were among his casual amusements, and if the result was an occasional dinner together, or first night at the Folies Dramatiques, his only reflection was that a girl who could do such things and not be compromised was rather pleasant to know, especially so clever a girl as Elfrida Bell. He did not recognize in his own mind the mingled beginnings of approval and disapproval which end in personal theory. He was quite unaware, for instance, that he liked the contemptuous way in which she

held at arm's length the moral laxity of the Quartier, and disliked the cool cynicism with which she flashed upon them there the sort of *jeu de mot* that did not make him uncomfortable on the lips of a Frenchwoman. He understood that she had nursed Nádie Palicsky through three weeks of diphtheria, during which time Monsieur Vambéry took up his residence in the next street, without any special throb of enthusiasm ; and he heard her quote Voltaire on the miracles—some of her ironies were a little old-fashioned—without conscious disgust. He was willing enough to meet her on the special plane she constituted for herself—not as a woman, but as an artist and a Bohemian. But there were others who made the same claim with whom it was an affectation or a policy, and Kendal granted it to Elfrida without any special conviction that she was more sincere than the rest. Besides, it is possible to grow indifferent even to the unconventionalities, and Kendal had been three years in the Quartier Latin.

CHAPTER VI.

IF Lucien had examined Miss Bell's work during the week of her experiment with Anglo-Parisian journalism, he would have observed that it grew gradually worse as the days went on. The devotion of the small hours to composition does not steady one's hand for the reproduction of the human muscles, or inform one's eye as to the correct manipulation of flesh tints. Besides, the model suffered in Elfrida's hands from an unconscious diminution of enthusiasm. She was finding her first serious attempt at writing more absorbing than she would have believed possible, and she felt that she was doing it better than she expected. She was hardly aware of the moments that slipped by while she dabbled aimlessly in unconsidered colour, meditating a phrase, or

leaned back and let nothing interfere with her consideration of the atelier with the other reproductive instinct. She did not recognize the deterioration in her work either, and at the very moment when Nádíe Palicsky, observing Lucien's neglect of her, inwardly called him a brute, Elfrida was planning to leave the atelier an hour earlier for the sake of the more urgent thing which she had to do. She finished it in five days, and addressed it to Frank Parke with a new and uplifting sense of accomplishment. The ever-fresh miracle happened to her too, in that the working out of one article begot the possibilities of half a dozen more, and the next day saw her well into another. In posting the first she had a premonition of success. She saw it as it would infallibly appear in a conspicuous place in *Raffini's Chronicle*, and heard the people of the American Colony wondering who in the world could have written it. She conceived that it would fill about two columns and a half. On Saturday afternoon, when Kendal joined her crossing the courtyard of the atelier, she was preoccupied with the form

of her rebuff to any inquiries that might be made as to whether she had written it.

They walked on together, talking casually of usual things. Kendal glancing every now and then at the wet study Elfrida was carrying home, felt himself distinctly thankful that she did not ask his opinion of it, as she had to his embarrassment once or twice before, though it was so very bad that he was half disposed to abuse it without permission. Miss Bell seemed persistently interested in other things however, the theatres, the ecclesiastical bill before the Chamber of Deputies, the new ambassador, even the recent improvement of the police system. Kendal found her almost tiresome. His half-interested replies interpreted themselves to her after awhile, and she turned their talk upon trivialities, with a gay exhilaration which was not her frequent mood.

She asked him to come up, when they arrived, with a frank cordiality which he probably thought of as the American way. He went up, at all events, and for the twentieth time admired the dainty chic of

the little apartment, telling himself, also for the twentieth time, that it was extraordinary how agreeable it was to be there, agreeable with a distinctly local agreeableness, whether its owner happened to be also there or not. In this he was altogether sincere, and only properly discriminating. He spent fifteen minutes wondering at her whimsical interest, and, when she suddenly asked him if he really thought the race had outgrown its physical conditions, he got up to go, declaring it was too bad, she must have been working up back numbers of the *Nineteenth Century*. At which she consented to turn their talk into its usual personal channel, and he sat down again content.

"Doesn't the Princess Bobaloff write a charming hand?" Elfrida said, presently, tossing him a square white envelope.

"It isn't hers, if it's an invitation. She has a wretched relation of a Frenchwoman living with her, who does all that. May I light a cigarette?"

"You know you may. It is an invitation, but I didn't accept."

“Her *soirée* last night? If I’d known you had been asked, I should have missed you.”

“I ought to tell you,” Elfrida went on, colouring a little, “that I was invited through Leila Van Camp—that ridiculously rich girl, you know, they say Lucien is in love with. The Van Camp has been affecting me a good deal lately. She says my manners are so pleasing, and, besides, Lucien once told her she painted better than I did. The Princess is a great friend of hers.”

“Why didn’t you go?” Kendal asked, without any appreciable show of curiosity. If he had been looking closely enough, he would have seen that she was waiting for his question.

“Oh, it lies somehow, that sort of thing, outside my idea of life. I have nothing to say to it, and it has nothing to say to me.”

Kendal smiled introspectively. He saw why he had been shown the letter. “And yet,” he said, “I venture to hope that if we had met there we might have had some little conversation.”

Elfrida leaned back in her chair, and

threw up her head, locking her slender fingers over her knee.

"Of course," she said, indifferently. "I understand why you should go. You must. You have arrived at a point where the public claims a share of your personality. That's different."

Kendal's face straightened out. He was too much of an Englishman to understand that a personally agreeable truth might not be flattery; and Elfrida never knew how far he resented her candour when it took the liberty of being gracious.

"I went in the humble hope of getting a good supper, and seeing some interesting people," he told her. "Loti was there, and Madame Rives-Chanler, and Sargent."

"And the supper?" Miss Bell inquired, with a touch of sarcasm.

"Disappointing," he returned, seriously. "I should say bad—as bad as possible."

She gave him an impatient glance. "But those people—Loti and the rest—it is only a serio-comic game to them to go to the Princess Bobaloff's. They wouldn't if they

could help it. They don't live their real lives in such places—among such people!”

Kendal took the cigarette from his mouth and laughed. “Your Bohemianism is quite Arcadian in its quality—deliciously fresh,” he declared. “I think they do. Genius clings to respectability after a time. A most worthy and admirable lady, the Princess.”

Elfrida raised the arch of her eyebrows. “Much too worthy and admirable,” she declared; and talked of something else, leaving Kendal rasped, as she sometimes did, without being in any degree aware of it.

“How preposterous it is,” he said, moved by his irritation to find something preposterous, “that girls like Miss Van Camp should come here to work.”

“They can't help being rich. It shows at least the germ of a desire to work out their own salvation. I think I like it.”

“It shows the germ of an affectation in rather an advanced stage of development. I give her three months more to tire of snubbing Lucien, and distributing caramels to the less fortunate young ladies of the

studio. Then she will pick up those pitiful attempts of hers, and take them to New York, and spend a whole season in glorious apology for them."

Elfrida looked at him steadily for an instant. Then she laughed lightly. "Thanks," she said, "I see you had not forgotten my telling you that Lucien said she painted better than I did."

Kendal wondered whether he had really meant to go so far. "I am sorry," he said, "but I am afraid I had not forgotten it."

"Well, you would not say it out of ill-nature. You must have wanted me to know—what you thought."

"I think," he said gravely, "that I did—at all events that I do—want you to know. It seems a pity that you should work on here—mistakenly—when there are other things that you could do so well."

"Other things have been mentioned to me before," she returned, with a strain in her voice that she tried to banish. "May I ask what particular thing occurs to you?"

He was already remorseful. After all,

what business of his was it to interfere, especially when he knew that she attached such absurd importance to his opinion?

"I hardly know," he said, "but there must be something. I am convinced that there is something."

Elfrida put her elbows on a little table, and shadowed her face with her hands.

"I wish I could understand," she said, "why I should be so willing to—to go on at any sacrifice if there is no hope in the end."

Kendal's mood of grim frankness overcome him again. "I believe I know," he said, watching her.

Her hand dropped from her face, and she turned it towards him mutely.

"It is not achievement you want, but success. That is why," said he.

There was silence for a moment, broken by light footsteps on the stair and a knock. "My good friends," cried Mademoiselle Palicky from the doorway, "have you been quarrelling?"

She made a little dramatic gesture to

match her words, which brought out every line of a black velvet and white corduroy dress which would have been a horror upon an Englishwoman. Upon Nádie Palicsky it was simply an admiration point of the kind never seen out of Paris, and its effect was instantaneous.

Kendal acknowledged it with a bow of exaggerated deference.

“*C'est parfait!*” he said with humility, and lifted a pile of newspapers off the nearest chair for her.

Nádie stood still, pouting. “Monsieur is amused,” she said, “monsieur is always amused. But I have that to tell which monsieur will graciously take *au grand sérieux*.”

“What is it, Nádie?” Elfrida asked, with something like dread in her voice. Nádie’s air was so important, so rejoiceful.

“*Ecoutez, donc!* I am to send two pictures to the Salon. Carolus Duran has already seen my sketch for one, and he says there is not a doubt, not a doubt, that it will be considered! Your congratulations, both

of you, or your hearts' blood ! For on my word of honour I did not expect it this year."

"A thousand and one!" cried Kendal, trying not to see Elfrida's face. "But if you did not expect it this year, mademoiselle, you were the only one who had so little knowledge of affairs," he added gaily.

"And now," Nádíe cried, as if he had interrupted her, "I am going to drive in the Bois to see what it will be like when the people in the best carriages turn and say, 'That is Mademoiselle Nádíe Palicsky, whose picture has just been bought for the Luxembourg.'"

She paused and looked for a curious instant at Elfrida, and then went quickly up behind her chair.

"*Embrasse-moi, chérie !*" she said, bringing her face with a bird-like motion close to the other girl.

Kendal saw an instinctive momentary aversion in the backward start of Elfrida's head, and from the bottom of his heart he was sorry for her. She pushed her friend away almost violently.

"No!" she said, "no! I am sorry, but it is too childish. We never kiss each other, you and I! And listen, Nádíe! I am delighted for you, but I have a sick headache—*la migraine*, you understand. And you must go away, both of you—both of you!"

Her voice raised itself in the last few words to an almost hysterical imperativeness.

As they went down the stairs together Mademoiselle Palicsky remarked to Mr. John Kendal, repentant of the good that he had done—

"So she has consulted her oracle, and it has barked out the truth. Let us hope she will not throw herself into the Seine!"

"Oh no!" Kendal replied. "She is horridly hurt, but I am glad to believe that she hasn't the capacity for tragedy. Somebody," he added gloomily, "ought to have told her long ago."

Half an hour later the postman brought Elfrida a letter from Mr. Frank Parke, and a packet containing her manuscript. It was a long letter, very kind and appreciative of the article, which Mr. Parke called bright

and gossipy, and, if anything, too cleverly unconventional in tone. He did not take the trouble to criticise it seriously, and left Elfrida under the impression that, from his point of view, at least, it had no faults. Mr. Parke had offered the article to *Raffini*, but while they might have printed it, upon his recommendation, it appeared that even his recommendation could not induce them to promise to pay for it. And it was a theory with him that what was worth printing was invariably worth paying for, so he returned the manuscript to its author in the sincere hope that it might yet meet its deserts. He had been thinking over the talk they had had together, and he saw more plainly than ever the hopelessness of her getting a journalistic start in Paris, however; he would distinctly advise her to try London instead.

There were a number of ladies' papers published in London—he regretted that he did not know the editors of any of them—and amongst them, with her freshness of style, she would be sure to find an opening. Mr.

Parke added the address of a lodging-house off Fleet Street where Elfrida would be in the thick of it, and the fact that he was leaving Paris for three months or so. He hoped she would write to him when he came back. It was a letter precisely calculated to draw an unsophisticated amateur mind away from any other mortification, to pour balm upon any unrelated wound. Elfrida felt herself armed by it to face a sea of troubles. Not absolutely, but almost, she convinced herself on the spot that her solemn choice of an art had been immature and to some extent groundless and unwarrantable; and she washed all her brushes with a mechanical and melancholy sense that it was for the last time. It was easier than she would have dreamed for her to decide to take Frank Parke's advice and go to London. The life of the Quartier had already vaguely lost in charm since she knew that she must be irredeemably a failure in the atelier, though she told herself, with a hot tear or two, that no one loved it better, more comprehendingly, than she did. Her impulse was to begin

packing at once, but she put that off until the next day, and wrote two or three letters instead. One was to John Kendal. This is the whole of it.

“Please believe me very grateful for your frankness this afternoon. I have been most curiously blind. But I agree with you that there is something else, and I am going away to find it out and to do it. When I succeed, I will let you know; but you shall not tell me that I have failed again.

“ELFRIDA BELL.”

The other was addressed to her mother, and when it reached Mr. and Mrs. Bell in Sparta, they said it was certainly sympathetic and very well written. This was to disarm one another's mind of the suspicion that its closing paragraph was doubtfully daughterly.

“In view of what are now your very limited resources, I am sure, dear mother, you will understand my unwillingness to make an additional drain upon them, as I

should do if I followed your wishes and came home. I am convinced of my ability to support myself, and I am not coming home. To avoid giving you the pain of repeating your request, and the possibility of your sending me money which you cannot afford to spare, I have decided not to let you know my whereabouts until I can write to you that I am in an independent position. I will only say that I am leaving Paris, and no letters sent to this address will be forwarded. I sincerely hope you will not allow yourself to be in any way anxious about me, for I assure you that there is not the slightest need. With much love to papa and yourself,

“ Always your affectionate daughter,

“ ELFRIDA.

“ P.S.—I hope your asthma has again succumbed to Dr. Paley.”

CHAPTER VII.

THERE was a scraping and a stumbling sound in the second-floor front bedroom of Mrs. Jordan's lodgings, in a by-way of Fleet Street, at two o'clock in the morning. It came up to Elfrida, mixed with the rattle of a departing cab over the paving-stones below, outside, where the fog was lifting and showing one street lamp to another. Elfrida, in her attic, had been sitting above the fog all night; her single candle had not been obscured by it. The cab had been paid and the andirons were being disturbed by Mr. Golightly Ticke, returned from the Criterion restaurant, where he had been supping with the leading lady of the Sparkle Company, at the leading lady's expense. She could afford it better than he could, she told him; and that was extremely true, for Mr. Ticke had

his capacities for light comedy still largely to prove, while Mademoiselle Phyllis Fane had almost disestablished herself upon the stage, so long and so prosperously she had pirouetted there. Mr. Golightly Ticke's case excited a degree of the large compassion which Mademoiselle Phyllis had for incipient genius of the interesting sex, and which served her instead of virtue of the more ordinary sort. He had a double claim upon it, because in addition to being tall and fair and misunderstood by most people, with a thin nose that went beautifully with a mediæval costume, he was such a gentleman. Phyllis loosened her purse-strings instinctively, with genuine gratification, whenever this young man approached. She believed in him; he had ideas, she said, and she gave him more: in the end he would be sure to "catch on." Through the invariable period of obscurity which comes before the appearance of any star, she was in the habit of stating that he would have no truer friend than Filly Fane.

She spoke to the manager, she pointed out Mr. Ticke's little parts to the more

intimate of her friends of the press. She sent him delicate little presents of expensive cigars, scents, and soaps; she told him often that he would infallibly "get there." The fact of his having paid his own cab-fare from the Criterion on this particular morning, gave him, as he found his way upstairs, almost an injured feeling of independence.

As the sounds defined themselves more distinctly troublous and uncertain, Elfrida laid down her pen and listened.

"What an absurd boy it is!" she said. "He's trying to go to bed in the fire-place."

As a matter of fact, Mr. Ticke's stage of intoxication was not nearly so advanced as that; but Elfrida's mood was borrowed from her article, and she felt the necessity of putting it graphically. Besides, a picturesque form of stating his condition was almost due to Mr. Ticke. Mr. Ticke lived the unfettered life, he was of the elect. Elfrida reflected, as Mr. Ticke went impulsively to rest, how easy it was to discover the elect. A glance would do it, a word, the turning of an eyelid. She knew it of

Golightly Ticke days before he came up, in an old velvet coat and without a shirt collar, to borrow a sheet of notepaper and an envelope from her. On that occasion Mr. Ticke had half apologized for his appearance, saying, "I'm afraid I'm rather a Bohemian," in his sympathetic voice. To which Elfrida had responded, handing him the notepaper, "Afraid!" and the understanding was established at once. Elfrida did not consider Mr. Ticke's other qualifications or disqualifications—that would have been a bourgeois thing to do. He was a *belle âme*, that was sufficient. He might find life difficult, it was natural and probable. She, Elfrida Bell, found it difficult. She had not succeeded yet, neither had he, therefore they had a comradeship—they and a few others—of revolt against the dull conventional British public that barred the way to success. Yesterday, she had met him at the street door, and he had stopped to remark that along the Embankment, nature was making a bad copy of one of Vereschagin's pictures. When people could say things like that,

nothing else mattered much. It is impossible to tell whether Miss Bell would have found room in this philosophy for the god-motherly benevolence of Mademoiselle Fane, if she had known of it, or not.

It was a low-roofed room in which Elfrida Bell meditated, biting the end of her pen, upon the difference it made when a fellow-being was not a Philistine, and it was not in the least like any other apartment Mrs. Jordan had to let. It was the atelier of the Rue Porte Royale transplanted. Elfrida had brought all her possessions with her, and took a nameless comfort in arranging them as she liked them best. "Try to feel at home," she said, whimsically, to her Indian zither, as she hung it up. "We shall miss Paris, you and I; but one day we shall go back together." A Japanese screen wandered across the room, and made a bedroom of the end. Elfrida had to buy that, and spent a day in finding a cheap one which did not offend her. The floor was bare, except for a little Afghan prayer carpet, Mrs. Jordan having removed, in

suspicious astonishment, an almost new tapestry of as nice a pattern as she ever set eyes on, at her lodger's request. A samovar stood on a little square table in the corner, and beside it a tin box of biscuits. The dormer windows were hung with Eastern stuffs; a Roman lamp stood on the mantel; a Koran-holder held Omar Kayyam, secondhand, and Meredith's last novel, and "Anna Karénina," and "Salammbô," and two or three weeks' numbers of the *Figaro*. Here and there, on the wall, a Salon photograph was fastened; a study of a girl's head that Nádie had given her was stuck with a Spanish dagger over the fire-place. A sketch of Vambéry's, and one of Kendal's, sacredly framed, hung where she could always see them. There was a vague suggestion of roses about the room, and a mingled fragrance of joss sticks and cigarettes. The candle shone principally upon a little bronze Buddha, who sat lotus-shrined on the writing-table, among Elfrida's papers, with an ineffable, inscrutable smile. On the top shelf of a closet in the wall, a

small pile of canvases gathered dust, face downwards. Not a brush-mark of her own was visible. She told herself that she had done with that.

The girl sat with her long cloak about her, and a blanket over her knees. Her fingers were almost nerveless with cold ; as she laid down her manuscript she tried to wring warmth into them. Her face was white. Her eyes were intensely wide open and wide awake ; they had black dashes underneath, an emphasis they did not need. She lay back in her chair, and gave the manuscript a little push toward Buddha, smiling in the middle of the table.

“Well?” she said, regarding him with defiant inquiry, cleverly marked.

Buddha smiled on. The candle sputtered, and his shadow danced on three or four long thick envelopes lying behind him. Elfrida’s eyes followed it.

“Oh!” said she, “you refer me to those, do you? *Ce n’est pas poli*, Buddha dear ; but you are always honest, aren’t you?” She picked up the envelopes, and held them fan-

wise before her. "Tell me, Buddha, why have they all been sent back? I, myself, read them with interest, I who wrote them, and surely that proves something." She pulled a page or two out of one of them, covered with her clear, conscious, clever handwriting, a handwriting with a dainty pose in it suggestive of inscrutable things behind the word. Elfrida looked at it affectionately, her eyes caressed the lines as she read them. "I find here true things and clever things," she went on; "yes, and original, *quite* original things. That about Balzac has never been said before—I assure you, Buddha, it has never been said before. Yet the editor of the *Athenian* returns it to me in two days with a printed form of thanks, exactly the same printed form of thanks with which he would return a poem by Arabella Jones. Is the editor of the *Athenian* a dolt, Buddha? The *Decade* type-writes his regrets—that's better; but the *Bystander* says nothing at all but 'declined with thanks' inside the flap of the envelope."

The girl stared absently into the candle.

She was not in reality greatly discouraged by these refusals, she knew that they were to be expected; indeed they formed part of the picturesqueness of the situation in which she saw herself, alone in London, making her fight for life as she found it worth living, by herself, for herself, in herself. It had gone on for six weeks, she thought she knew all its bitterness, and she saw nowhere the faintest gleam of coming success; yet the idea of giving it up did not even occur to her. At this moment she was reflecting that, after all, it was something that her articles had been returned,—the editors had evidently thought them worth *that* much trouble; she would send them all off again in the morning, trying the *Athenian* article with the *Decade*, and the rejected of the *Decade* with the *Bystander*; they would see that she did not cringe before one failure. Gathering up the loose pages of one article to put them back, her eyes ran mechanically again over the opening sentences of one of them. Suddenly something magnetized them, a new interest flashed into them; with a little nervous

movement she brought the page closer to the candle and looked at it carefully. As she looked she blushed crimson, and, dropping the paper, covered her face with her hands.

“Oh, Buddha!” she cried softly, struggling with her mortification, “no wonder they rejected it! There’s a mistake in the very second line—a mistake in *spelling*!” She felt her face grow hotter as she said it, and instinctively she lowered her voice. Her vanity was pricked as with a sword; for a moment she suffered keenly. Her fabric of hope underwent a horrible collapse; the blow was at its very foundation. While the minute-hand of her mother’s old-fashioned gold watch travelled to its next point, or for nearly as long as that, Elfrida was under the impression that a person who spelled “artificially” with one “l” could never succeed in literature. She believed she had counted the possibilities of failure. She had thought of style, she had thought of sense—she had never thought of spelling! She began with a penknife to make the word right, and almost fearfully let herself read

the first few lines. "There are no more," she said to herself with a sigh of relief. Turning the page, she read on, and the irritation began to fade out of her face. She turned another page, and another, and her eyes grew interested, absorbed, enthusiastic. There were some more, one or two, but she did not see them. Her house of hope built itself again. "A mere slip!" she said, reassured; and then, as her eye fell on a little fat dictionary that held down a pile of papers, "but I'll go over them all in the morning, to make sure, with *that*."

Then she turned with new pleasure to the finished work of the night, settled the sheets together, put them in an envelope, and addressed it—

The Editor,
The Consul,
6, Tibby's Lane,
Fleet Street, E.C.

She hesitated before she wrote—should she write "The Editor" only, or "George Alfred Curtis, Esq.," first, which would

attract his attention perhaps, as coming from somebody who knew his name? She had a right to know his name, she told herself; she had met him once in the happy Paris days. Kendal had introduced him to her, in brief encounters at the Salon, and she remembered with amusement the appreciativeness of the glance that accompanied the stout middle-aged English gentleman's bow. Kendal had told her then that Mr. Curtis was the editor of the *Consul*. Yes, she had a right to know his name. And it might make the faintest shadow of a difference. But no, "The Editor" was more dignified, more impersonal; her article should go in upon its own merits, absolutely upon its own merits; and so she wrote.

It was nearly three o'clock, and cold, shivering cold. Mr. Golightly Ticke had wholly subsided. The fog had climbed up to her, and the candle showed it clinging to the corners of the room. The water in the samovar was hissing; Elfrida warmed her hands upon the cylinder, and made herself some tea. With it she disposed of a great

many sweet biscuits from the biscuit-box, and thereafter lighted a cigarette. As she smoked she re-read an old letter, a long letter in a flowing foreign hand, written from among the haymakers at Barbizon, that exhaled a delicate perfume. Elfrida had read it thrice for comfort in the afternoon, now she tasted it, sipping here and there with long enjoyment of its deliciousness. She kissed it as she folded it up, with the silent thought that this was the bread of her life, and soon—oh, passably soon—she could bear the genius in Nádíe's eyes again.

Then she went to bed. "You little brute," she said to Buddha, who still smiled, as she blew out the candle, "can't you forget it?"

CHAPTER VIII.

MISS BELL arose late the next morning, which was not unusual. Mrs. Jordan had knocked three times vainly, and then left the young lady's chop and coffee outside the door, on the landing. If she *would* 'ave it cold, Mrs. Jordan reasoned, she would, and more warnin' than knockin' three times no livin' bean could expect. Mrs. Jordan went downstairs uneasy in her mind, however. The matter of Miss Bell's breakfast generally left her uneasy in her mind. It was not in reason, Mrs. Jordan thought, that "a young littery lady should keep that close;" for Elfrida's custom of having her breakfast deposited outside her door was as invariable as it was perplexing. Miss Bell was as charming to her landlady as she was to everybody else,

but Mrs. Jordan found a polite pleasantness that permitted no opportunity for expansion whatever, more stimulating to the curiosity and irritating to the mind generally than the worst of bad manners would have been. That was the reason she knocked three times when she brought up Miss Bell's breakfast. At Mr. Ticke's door she rapped once, and cursorily at that. Mr. Ticke was as conversational as you please on all occasions; and besides, Mr. Ticke's door was usually half open. The shroud of mystery in which Mrs. Jordan enwrapped her "third floor front" grew more impenetrable as the days went by. Her original theory, which established Elfrida as the heroine of the latest notorious divorce case, was admirably ingenious, but collapsed in a fortnight with its own weight. "Besides," Mrs. Jordan reasoned, "if it 'ad been that person, ware is the corrispondent all this time? There's been nothin' in the shape of a corrispondent hangin' round *this* house, for I've kep' my eye open for one. I give 'er up," said Mrs. Jordan darkly, "that's wot I do, an' I only 'ope I won't find 'er suicided

on charcoal some mornin', like that pore young poetiss in yesterday's paper."

Another knock, half an hour later, found Elfrida finishing her coffee. Out of doors the world was grey, the little square windows were beaten with rain. Inside, the dreariness was redeemed to the extent of a breath, a suggestion. An essence came out of the pictures and the trappings and blended itself with the lingering fragrance of the joss sticks and the roses and the cigarettes in a delightful manner. The room was almost warm with it. It seemed to centre in Elfrida; as she sat beside the writing-table, whose tumultuous papers had been pushed away to make room for the breakfast dishes, she was instinct with it.

Miss Bell glanced hurriedly around the room. It was unimpeachable; not so much as a strayed collar interfered with its character as an apartment where a young lady might receive. "Come in," she said. She knew the knock.

The door opened slowly to a hesitating push, and disclosed Mr. Golightly Ticke by

degrees. Mr. Ticke was accustomed to boudoirs less rigid in their exclusiveness, and always handled Miss Bell's door with a certain amount of embarrassment. If she wanted a chance to whisk anything out of the way, he would give her that chance. Fully in view of the lady and the coffee-pot, Mr. Ticke made a stage bow.

"Here is my apology," he said, holding out a letter. "I found it in the box as I came in."

It was another long thick envelope, and in its upper left-hand corner was printed, in Early English lettering, "The St. George's Gazette." Elfrida took it with the faintest perceptible change of countenance. It was another discomfiture, but it did not prevent her from opening her dark eyes with a remote effect of pathos entirely disconnected with its reception.

"And you climbed all these flights to give it to me!" she said with gravely smiling plaintiveness. "Thank you. Why should you have been so good? Please—please sit down."

Mr. Ticke looked at her expressively. "I don't know, Miss Bell, really. I don't usually take much trouble for people. I say it without shame. Most people are not worth it. You don't mind my saying that you're an exception, though. Besides, I'm afraid I had my eye on my reward."

"Your reward?" Elfrida repeated. Her smiling comprehension insisted that it did not understand.

"The pleasure of saying good morning to you. But that is an inanity, Miss Bell, and unworthy of me. I should have left you to divine it."

"How could I divine an inanity in connection with you?" she answered; and her eyes underlined her words. When he returned, "Oh, you always parry!" she felt a little thrill of pleasure with herself. "How did it go—last night?" she asked.

"Altogether lovely. Standing room only, and the boxes taken for a week. I find myself quite adorable in my little part now. I *feel* it, you know. I am James Jones, a solicitor's clerk, to my fingers' ends. My

nature changes, my environment changes the instant I go on. But a little thing upsets me. Last night I had to smoke a cigar,—the swell of the piece gives me a cigar—and he gave me a poor one. It wasn't in tone—the unities required that he should give me a good cigar. See? I felt quite confused for the moment."

Elfrida's eyes had strayed to the corner of her letter. "If you want to read that," continued Mr. Ticke, "I know you won't mind me."

"Thanks," said Elfrida, calmly. "I've read it already. It's a rejected article."

"My play came back again yesterday, for the thirteenth time. The fellow didn't even look at it. I know, because I stuck the second and third pages together as if by accident, and when it came back they were still stuck. And yet these men pretend to be on the look out for original work! It's a thrice beastly world, Miss Bell."

Elfrida widened her eyes again, and smiled with a vague impersonal winningness. "I suppose one ought not to care," said she, "but there is the vulgar necessity of living."

“Yes,” agreed Mr. Ticke; and then, sardonically, “Waterloo Bridge at ebb tide is such a nasty alternative. I could never get over the idea of the drainage.”

“Oh, I know a better way than that.” She chose her words deliberately. “A much better way. I keep it here”—holding up the bent little finger of her left hand. It had a clumsy silver ring on it, square and thick in the middle, bearing deep-cut Sanskrit letters. “It is a dear little alternative,” she went on, “like a bit of brown sugar. Rather a nice taste, I believe—and no pain. When I am quite tired of it all, I shall use this, I think. My idea is that it’s weak to wait until you can’t help it. Besides, I could never bear to become—less attractive than I am now.”

“Poison!” said Mr. Golightly Ticke, with an involuntarily horrified face.

Elfrida’s hand was hanging over the edge of the table, and he made as if he would examine the ring without the formality of asking leave.

She drew her fingers away instantly.

“In the vernacular,” she answered coolly,
“‘You may not touch it.’”

“I beg your pardon. But how awfully chic!”

“It *is* chic, isn’t it? Not so very old, you know.” Elfrida raised her eyebrows and pursed her lips a little. “It came from Persia. They still do things like that in those delightful countries. And I’ve had it tested. There’s enough to satisfy three people. When you are quite sure you want it, I don’t mind sharing it with you. If you are going out, Mr. Ticke, will you post this for me? It’s a thing about American social ideals, and I’m trying the *Consul* with it.”

“Delighted. But if I know the editor of the *Consul*, it won’t get two minutes’ consideration.”

“No?”

“Being the work of a lady, no. Doesn’t matter how good it is. The thing to know about the *Consul* man is this: he’s very nice to ladies—can’t resist ladies; consequence is, the paper’s half full of ladies’ copy every

week. I know, because a cousin of mine writes for him, and most unsympathetic stuff it is. Yet it always goes in, and she gets her three guineas a week as regularly as the day comes. But her pull is that she knows him personally, and she's a damned pretty woman."

Elfrida followed him with interest. "Is she as pretty as I am?" she asked, purely for information.

"Lord, no!" Mr. Ticke responded warmly. "Besides, you've got style, and distinction, and ideas. Any editor would appreciate your points, once you saw him. But you've got to see him first. My candid advice is, *take* this to the *Consul* office."

Elfrida looked at him in a way which baffled him to understand. "I don't think I can do that," she said slowly; and then added, "I don't know."

"Well," he said, "I'll enter my protest against the foolishness of doing it this way, by refusing to post the letter." Mr. Ticke was tremendously in earnest, and threw it dramatically upon the table. "You may

be a George Eliot or an Elizabeth Barrett Browning, but in these days you want every advantage, Miss Bell, and women who succeed understand that."

Elfrida's face was still enigmatic, so enigmatic that Mr. Ticke felt reluctantly constrained to stop.

"I must pursue the even tenor of my way," he said airily, looking at his watch. "I've an engagement to lunch at one. Don't ask me to post that article, Miss Bell. And, by the way," as he turned to go, "I haven't a smoke about me. Could you give me a cigarette?"

"Oh yes," said Elfrida, without looking at him, "as many as you like." She pushed an open box towards him; but she had an absent considering air that did not imply any idea of what she was doing.

"Thanks, only one—or perhaps two—there now, two. How good these little Hafiz fellows are! Thanks, awfully. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," said Elfrida, with her eyes on the packet addressed to the editor of the

Consul: and Mr. Golightly Ticke tripped downstairs. She had not looked at him again.

She sat thinking, thinking. She applied herself first to stimulate the revolt that rose within her against Golightly Ticke's advice—his intolerably, no, his forgetfully presumptuous advice. She would be just to him; he talked so often to women with whom such words would carry weight: for an instant he might easily fail to recognize that she was not one of those. It was absurd to be angry, and not at all in accordance with any theory of life that operated in Paris. Instinctively, at the thought of a moral indignation upon such slender grounds in Paris, she gave herself the benefit of a thoroughly expressive Parisian shrug. And how they understood success in Paris! Beasts!

And yet, it was all in the game. It was a matter of skill, of superiority, of puppet-playing. One need not soil one's hands—in private one could always laugh. She remembered how Nádíe had laughed when

three bunches of roses from three different art critics had come in together—how inextinguishably Nádíe had laughed. It was in itself a success of its kind. Nádíe had no scruples except about her work. She went straight to her end, believing it to be an end worth arriving at by any means. And now Nádíe would presently be *très en vue*, *très en vue*! After all, it was a much finer thing to be scrupulous about one's work—that was the real morality, the real life. Elfrida closed her eyes, and felt a little shudder of consciousness of how real it was.

When she opened them again she was putting down her protest with a strong hand, crushing her rebellious instincts unmercifully. She did not allow herself a moment's self-deception. She did not insult her intelligence by the argument that it was a perfectly harmless and proper thing to offer a piece of work to an editor in person—that every lady did it,—that she might thereby obtain some idea of what would suit his paper if her article did not. She

was perfectly straightforward in confronting Golightly Ticke's idea, and she even disrobed it, to her own consciousness, of any garment of custom and conventionality it may have had to his. Another woman might have taken it up and followed it without an instant's hesitation, as a matter concerning which there could be no doubt, a matter of ordinary expediency: of course, a man would be nicer to a woman than to another man; they always were; it was natural. But Elfrida, with her merciless insight, had to harden her heart and ply her self-respect with assurance that it was all in the game, and it was a superb thing to be playing the game. Deliberately she chose the things she looked best in, and went out.

CHAPTER IX.

THE weather had cleared to a compromise. The dome of St. Paul's swelled divinely out of the fog as Elfrida turned into Fleet Street, and the railway bridge that hangs over the heads of the people at the bottom of Ludgate Hill seemed a curiously solid structure connecting space with space. Fleet Street, wet and brown, and standing in all unremembered fashions, lifted its antiquated head and waited for more rain; the pavements glistened brightly, till the tracking heels of the crowd gave them back their squalor; and there was everywhere that newness of turmoil that seemed to burst even in the turbulent streets of the City when it stops raining. The girl made her way toward Charing Cross with the westward going crowd. It went with a steady

respectable jog-trot, very careful of its skirts and umbrellas and the bottoms of its trousers; she took pleasure in hastening past it with her light gait. She would walk to the *Consul* office, which was in the vicinity of the Haymarket,—indeed she must, for the sake of economy. “I ought really to be very careful,” thought Elfrida. “I’ve only eight sovereigns left, and I can’t—oh, I *can’t* ask them for any more at home.” So she went swiftly on, pausing once before a picture-dealer’s in the Strand to make a mocking mouth at the particularly British quality of the art which formed the day’s exhibit, and once to glance at a news stand, where two women of the street, one still young and pretty, the other old and foul, were buying the *Police Gazette* from a stolid-faced boy. “What a subject for Nádíe!” she said to herself, smiling, and hurried on.

Twenty yards further, a carter’s horse lay dying, with its head upon the pavement. She made an impulsive detour of nearly half a mile to avoid passing the place, and

her thoughts recurred painfully to the animal half a dozen times.

The rain came down again before she reached the *Consul* office: a policeman misinformed her; she had a difficulty in finding it. She arrived at last with damp skirts and muddy boots. It had been a long walk, and the article upon American social ideas was limp and spotted. A door confronted her, flush with the street. She opened it, and found herself at the bottom of a flight of stairs, steep, dark, and silent. She hesitated a moment and then went up. At the top another closed door met her, with *The Consul* painted in black letters on the part of it that consisted of ground glass, somewhat the worse for pencil-points and finger-nails. Elfrida lifted her hand to knock, then changed her mind and opened the door.

It was a small room, lined on two sides with deal compartments bulging with dusty papers. There were two or three shelves of uninteresting-looking books, and a desk which extended into a counter. The upper

panes of the window were ragged with cobwebs, and the air of the place was redolent of stale publications. A thick-set little man in spectacles sat at the desk. It was not Mr. Curtis.

The thick-set man rose as Elfrida entered, and came forward a dubious step or two. His expression was not encouraging.

"I have called to see the editor—Mr. Curtis," said she.

"The editor is not here."

"Oh— isn't he? I'm sorry for that. When is he likely to be in? I want to see him particularly."

"He only comes here once a week—for about an hour," replied the little man, reluctant even to say so much. "But I could see that he got a letter."

"Thanks," returned Elfrida. "At what time, and on what day, does he usually come?"

"That I'm not at liberty to say," the occupant of the desk replied briefly, and sat down again.

"Where is Mr. Curtis?" Elfrida asked.

She had not counted upon this. To the physical depression of her walk, there added itself a strong disgust with the unsuccessful situation. She persisted, knowing what she would have to suffer from herself if she failed.

“Mr. Curtis is in the country. I cannot possibly give you his address. You can write to him here, and the letter will be forwarded. But he only sees people by appointment—especially ladies,” the little man added, with a half-smile which had more significance in it than Elfrida could bear. Her face set itself against the anger that burnt up in her, and she walked quickly from the door to the desk, her wet skirts swishing with her steps. She looked straight at the man, and began to speak in a voice of constraint and authority.

“You will be kind enough to get up,” she said, “and listen to what I have to say.”

The man got up instantly.

“I came here,” she went on, “to offer your editor an article—this article.” She drew out

the manuscript, and laid it before him. "I thought from the character of the contributions in last week's number of the *Consul* that he might very well be glad of it."

Her tone reduced the man to silence. Mechanically he picked up the manuscript and fingered the leaves.

"Read the first few sentences, please," said Elfrida.

"I've nothing to do with that department, miss."

"I have no intention whatever of leaving it with you, but I shall be obliged if you will read the first few sentences." He read them, the girl standing watching him.

"Now," said she, "do you understand?" She took the pages from his hand, and returned them to the envelope.

"Yes, miss, it's certainly interesting, but——"

"Be quite sure you understand," said Elfrida, as the ground-glass door closed behind her.

Before she reached the foot of the staircase she was in a passion of tears. She leaned

against the wall in the half darkness of the passage, shaking with sobs, raging with anger and pity, struggling against her own contempt. Gradually she gained a hold upon herself, and as she dried her eyes finally she lost all feeling but a heavy sense of failure. She sat down faintly on the lowest step, remembering that she had eaten nothing since breakfast, and fanned her flushed face with the sheets of her manuscript. She preferred that even the unregarding London streets should not see the traces of her distress. She was still sitting there, ten minutes later, when the door opened, and threw the grey light from outside over her. She had found her feet before Mr. Curtis had fairly seen her. He paused in astonishment, with his gloved hand upon the knob. The girl seemed to have started out of the shadow, and the emotion of her face dramatized its beauty. She made a step toward the door.

“Can I do anything for you?” asked the editor of the *Consul*, taking off his hat.

“Nothing, thank you,” Elfrida replied,

looking beyond him. "Unless you will kindly allow me to pass."

It was raining again, doggedly, as it does in the late afternoon. Elfrida thought, with a superlative pang of discomfort, of the three or four blocks that lay between her and the nearest baker's shop. She put up her umbrella, gathered her skirts up behind, and started wearily for the Haymarket. She had never in her life felt so tired. Suddenly a thrill of consciousness went up from her left hand—the hand that held up her skirts—such a thrill as is known only to the sex that wills to have its pockets there. She made one or two convulsive confirmatory clutches at it from the outside; then, with a throe of actual despair, she thrust her hand into her pocket. It was a crushing fact, her purse was gone—her purse, that held the possibilities of her journalistic future molten and stamped in eight gold sovereigns,—her purse!

Elfrida cast one hopeless look at the pavement behind her before she allowed herself to realize the situation. Then she faced it, addressing a dainty French oath to the

necessity. "Come," she said to herself, "now it begins to be really amusing, *la vraie comédie*." She saw herself in the part—it was an artistic pleasure,—alone in a city of melodrama, without a penny, only her brains. Besides, the sense of extremity pushed and concentrated her; she walked on with new energy and purpose. As she turned into the Haymarket a cab drew up almost in front of her. Through its rain-beaten glass front she recognized a face—Kendal's. His head was thrown back to speak to the driver through the roof. In the instant of her glance, Elfrida saw that he wore a bunch of violets in his button-hole, that he was looking splendidly well. Then, with a smile that recognized the dramatic value of his appearance at the moment, she lowered her umbrella and passed on, unseen.

Almost gaily she walked into a pawnbroker's shop, and obtained, with perfect nonchalance, five pounds upon her mother's watch. She had no idea that she ought to dispute the dictum of the bald young man with the fishy eyes and the high collar; it did

not occur to her that she was paid too little. What she realized was, that she had wanted to pawn something all her life—it was a deliciously effective extremity. She reserved her rings with the distinct purpose of having the experience again. Then she made a substantial lunch at a rather expensive restaurant—"It isn't time yet for crusts and dripping," she reflected—and tipped the waiter a shilling, telling him to get her a cab. As she turned into the Strand she told the cabman to drive slowly, and made him stop at the first newspaper office she saw. As she alighted, a sense of her extravagance dawned upon her, and she paid the man off. Then she made a resolutely charming ascent to the editorial rooms of the *Illustrated Age*.

Twenty minutes later, she came down again, and the door was opened for her by Mr. Arthur Rattray, one of the sub-editors, a young man who had already distinguished himself on the staff of the *Age* by his intelligent perception of paying matter and his enterprise in securing it. Elfrida continued to carry her opinions upon the social

ideals of her native democracy in their much-stained envelope, but there was a light in her eyes which seemed to be the reflection of success.

"It's still raining," said the young man, cheerfully.

"So it is," Elfrida responded. "And, oh, how atrocious of me! I've left my umbrella in the cab!"

"Hard luck!" exclaimed Mr. Rattray. "An umbrella is an organic part of one in London. Shall I stop this 'bus?"

"Thanks, no. I'll walk, I think. It's only a little way. I shan't get wet. Good night." Elfrida nodded to him brightly, and hurried off; but it could not have occasioned her surprise to find Mr. Rattray beside her a moment later, with a careful and attentive umbrella, and the intention of being allowed to accompany her that little way. By the time they arrived, Mr. Rattray had pledged himself to visit Scotland Yard next day in search of a dark brown silk umbrella, with a handle in the similitude of an ivory mummy.

"Are these your diggings?" he asked,

as they reached the house. "Why, Ticke lives here too—the gentle Golightly! Do you know him?" Elfrida acknowledged her acquaintance with Mr. Ticke, and Mr. Rattray hastened to deprecate her thanks for his escort. "Remember," he said, "no theories, no fine writing, no compositions. Describe what you've seen and know, and give it a tang—an individuality. And so far as we are concerned, I think we could use that thing you proposed about the Latin Quarter, with plenty of facts about the cost of the training there, very well. But you make it short."

CHAPTER X.

KENDAL mounted to Elfrida's apartment in the Rue Porte Royale to verify the intimation of her departure, or haply to forestall its execution, the morning after her note reached him. He found it bare and dusty. A workman was mending the stove. The concierge stood looking on with her arms folded above the most striking feature of her personality. Every vestige of Elfrida was gone, and the tall windows were open, letting the raw February air blow through. Outside, the sunlight lay in squares and triangles on the roofs, and gave the place its finishing touch of characterlessness. Yes, truly, mademoiselle had gone, the evening before. Was monsieur, then, not aware? The concierge was of opinion that mademoiselle had had bad news, but her tone implied that no news could be

quite bad enough to justify the throwing up of such desirable apartments upon such short notice. Mademoiselle had left in such haste that she had forgotten both to say where she was going and to leave an address for letters ; and it would not be easy to surpass the consciousness of injury with which the concierge demanded what she was to say to the *facteur* on the day of the post from America, when there were always four or five letters for mademoiselle. Monsieur would be *bien aimable*, if he would allow that they should be directed to him. Upon reflection, monsieur declined this responsibility. With the faintest ripple of resentment at being left out of Elfrida's confidence, he stated to himself that it would be intrusive. He advised the concierge to keep them for a week or two, during which Miss Bell would be sure to remember to send for them, and turned to go.

“ Mademoiselle *est allée* à la Gare du Nord,” added the concierge, entirely aware that she was contributing a fact to Kendal's mental speculation, and wishing it had a greater intrinsic value. But Kendal merely raised

his eyebrows in polite acknowledgment of unimportant information. "En effet !" he said, and went away. Nevertheless, he could not help reflecting that *Gare du Nord* probably meant Calais, and Calais meant England, doubtless London. As he thought of it, he assured himself that it was London, and his irritation vanished at the thought of the futility of Elfrida in London. It gave him a half-curious, half-solicitous amusement instead. He pictured her with her Hungarian peasant's cloak, and any one of her fantastic hats, in the conventional highways he knew so well, and smiled. "She will have to take herself differently there," he reflected, without pausing to consider exactly what he meant by it; "and she'll find that a bore." As yet he himself had never taken her differently so far as he was aware, and in spite of the obvious provocation of her behaviour, it did not occur to him to do it now. He reflected with a shade of satisfaction that she knew his London address. When she saw quite fit she would doubtless inform him as to what she was doing and where she might be found. He smiled

again at the thought of the considerations which Elfrida would put into the balance against the pleasure of seeing him. They were not humiliating. He was content to swing high on the other side indefinitely ; but he admitted to himself that she had taken a pleasure out of Paris for him, and went back to his studio missing it. He went on missing it for quite two days, at the end of which he received an impetuous visit—excessively impetuous considering the delay—from Nádíe Palicsky. In its course, Mademoiselle Palicsky declared herself robbed and wronged by *cette incomprise d'Américaine*, whom she loved, did he understand ? No, it was not probable that he understood—what did a man know of love ! As much perhaps as that flame—Kendal permitted himself the luxury of a fire. Nádíe stared into it for a moment with cynical eyes. Under the indirect influence of Kendal's regard they softened.

“She always understood ! It was a joy to show her anything. She interpreted Bastien Lepage better than I—indeed that is true—

but only with her soul: she had no hands. Yes, I loved her, and she was good for me. I drew three breaths in her presence for one in her absence. And she has taken herself away. Even in her letter—I had a line too—she was as remote as a star! I hope,” continued Nádie with innocent candour, as she swung her little feet on the corner of Kendal’s table, “that you do not love her too. I say prayers to *le bon Dieu* about it. I burn candles.”

“And why?” Kendal asked, with a vigorous twist of his palette-knife.

“Because you are such a beast,” she responded, calmly watching his work with her round cleft chin in the shell of her hand. “That’s not bad, you know. That nearest girl sitting on the grass is almost felt. But if you show it to the English they will be so shocked that they will use lorgnettes to hide their confusion. Ah!” she said, jumping down, “here am I wasting myself on you, with a carriage *à l’heure*! You are not worth it,” and she went.

After that it seemed to Kendal that he did

not miss Elfrida so much. Certainly it never occurred to him to hasten his departure a day on her account, and there came a morning when he drove through Bloomsbury and realized that he had not thought about her for a fortnight. The British Museum suggested her to him there—the British Museum, and the certainty that within its massive walls a number of unimaginative young women in collarless sage-green gowns were copying casts of antique sculptures at that moment. But he did not allow himself to suppose that she could possibly be among them.

He sniffed London all day with a home-returning satisfaction in her solidity, and her ugliness, and her low-toned fogs, and her great throbbing, unostentatious importance, which the more flippant capital seemed to have intensified in him. He ordered the most British luncheon he could think of, and reflected upon the superiority of the beer. He read two leaders in the *Standard* through to the bitter end, and congratulated himself and the newspaper that there was no rag of

an absurd feuilleton to distract his attention from the importance of the news of the day. He remembered all sorts of acquaintances that Paris had foamed over for months. His heart warmed to a certain whimsical old couple who lived in Park Street and went out to walk every morning after breakfast with their poodle. He felt disposed to make a formal call upon them, and inquire after the poodle. It was perhaps with an unconscious desire to make rather more of the idyl of his home-coming that he went to see the Cardiffs instead, who were his very old friends, and lived in Kensington Square.

As he turned out of Kensington High into a shabby little thoroughfare, and through it to this quiet, neglected, high-nosed old locality, he realized with an added satisfaction that he had come back to Thackeray's London. One was apt, he reflected with a charity he would not always have allowed himself, to undervalue Thackeray in these days. After all, he once expressed London so well that now London expressed him, and that was something.

Kendal found the Cardiffs—there were only two, Janet and her father—at tea, and the Halifaxes there, four people he could always count on to be glad to see him. It was written candidly in Janet's face—she was a natural creature—as she asked him how he dared to be so unexpected. Lady Halifax cried out robustly from the sofa, to know how many pictures he had brought back; and Miss Halifax, full of the timid enthusiasm of the well-brought-up elderly girl, gave him a sallow but agreeable regard from under her ineffective black hat, and said what a surprise it was. When they had all finished, Lawrence Cardiff took his elbow off the mantel-piece, changed his cup into his other hand to shake hands, and said, with his quiet clean-shaven smile, “So you're back!”

“Daddy has been hoping you would be here soon,” said Miss Cardiff. “He wants the support of your presence. He's been daring to enumerate ‘Our Minor Artists’ in the *Brown Quarterly*, and his position is perfectly terrible. Already he's had forty-one

letters from friends, relatives, and picture-dealers suggesting names he has doubtless forgotten ! Poor daddy says he never knew them ! ”

“ Has he mentioned me ? ” asked Kendal, sitting down squarely with his cup of tea.

“ He has not.”

“ Then it’s in the character of the uncomplaining left-over that I’m wanted—the modest person who waits until he’s better. I refuse to act. I’ll go over to the howling majority.”

“ *You* will never be a minor artist, Mr. Kendal,” ventured Miss Halifax.

“ Certainly not, you will rise to greatness at a bound ! ” said Lady Halifax, with substantial conviction, and an illustrative wave of a fat, well-gloved hand with a doubled-up fragment of bread and butter between the thumb and forefinger ; “ or we shall be much disappointed in you.”

“ It’s rapidly becoming a delicate compliment to have been left out,” Mr. Cardiff remarked, with melancholy.

“ Some of those you’ve honoured with

your recognition are the maddest of all, aren't they, daddy—as we say in America! Dear old thing, you *are* in a perilous case, and who is to take you round at the Private Views this year—that's the question of the hour! You needn't depend upon me! There won't be a soul on the line that you haven't either put in or left out!”

“It was a fearful thing to write about,” Kendal responded comfortably. “He deserves all the consequences. Let him go round alone.” Under the surface of his thoughts was a pleased recognition of how little a fresh-coloured English girl changes in three years. Looking at Miss Halifax's hat it occurred to him that it was an agreeable thing not to be eternally “struck” by the apparel of women—so forcibly, that he almost said it. “What have you been doing?” he asked Janet.

“Wonders,” Lady Halifax responded for her. “I can't think where she gets the energy, or the brains——”

“Can't you!” her father interrupted. “Upon my word!”

Mr. Cardiff had the serious facial muscles of a comedian, and the rigid discipline he was compelled to give them as a professor of Oriental tongues at London University intensified their effect when it was absurd. The rest laughed, and his cousin went on to say that she wished *she* had the gift. Her daughter echoed her, looking at Janet in a way that meant she would say it, whatever the consequences might be.

"I must see something," said Kendal, "immediately."

"*See something!*" exclaimed Lady Halifax. "Well, look in the last number of the *London Magazine*. But you'll please show something first."

"Yes, indeed!" Miss Halifax echoed.

"When will you be ready for inspection?" Mr. Cardiff asked.

"Come on Thursday, all of you. I'll show you what there is."

"Will you give us our tea?" Miss Halifax inquired with a nervous smile.

"Of course. And there will be buns. You will do me the invaluable service of

representing the opinion of the British public in advance. Will Thursday suit?"

"Perfectly," Lady Halifax replied. "The old rooms in Bryanston Street, I suppose?"

"Thursday won't suit us," Janet put in decisively. "No, papa, I've got people coming here to tea. Besides, Lady Halifax is quite equal to representing the whole British public by herself, aren't you, dear?" That excellent woman nodded with a pretence of loftily consenting, and her daughter gave Janet rather a suspicious glance. "Daddy and I will come another day," Janet went on in reassuring tones; "but we shall expect buns too, remember."

Then they talked of the crocuses in Kensington Gardens, and of young Skeene's new play at the Princess's—they all knew young Skeene, and wished him well,—and of Framley's forthcoming novel—Framley, who had made his noble reputation by portrait-painting—good old Framley,—how would it go?

"He knows character," Kendal said.

"That's nothing new," retorted Lawrence

Cardiff. "Does he know where it comes from and where it's going to? And can he choose? and has he the touch? And hasn't he been too long a Royal Academician and a member of the Church of England and a believer in himself? Oh no; Framley hasn't anything to tell this generation that he couldn't say best on canvas."

"Well," said Lady Halifax, disconcertingly, "I suppose the carriage is at the door, Lawrence; but you might just send to inquire. The horses stand so badly, I told Peters he might take them round and round the square."

Cardiff looked at her with amused reproach, and rang the bell, while Janet begged somebody or anybody to have another cup of tea. The Halifaxes always tried Janet.

They went at last, entreating Cardiff, to his annoyance, not to come down the narrow winding stair with them to their carriage. To him no amount of familiar coming and going could excuse the most trivial of such negligences. He very often put Janet into her cab, always if it rained.

The moment they left the room a new atmosphere created itself there, for the two that remained. They sought each other's eyes with the pleasantest sense of being together in reality for the first time; and though Janet marked it by nothing more significant than a suggestion that Kendal should poke the fire, there was an appreciable admission in her tone that they were alone and free to talk, which he recognized with great good will. He poked the fire, and she, on her low chair, clasping her knee with both hands, looked almost pretty in the blaze. There had always been between them a distinct understanding, the understanding of good fellowship and ideas of work, and Kendal saw with pleasure that it was going to be renewed.

"I am dying to tell you about it," he said.

"Paris?" she asked, looking up at him. "I am dying to hear. The people, especially the people! Lucien, what was he like? One hears so much of Lucien—they make him a priest and a king together. And did you go to Barbizon?"

Another in her place might have added, "And why did you write so seldom?" There was something that closed Janet's lips to this. It was the same thing that would not permit her to call Kendal "Jack," as several other people did; though her Christian name had been allowed to him for a long time. It made an awkwardness sometimes, for she would not say "Mr. Kendal" either—that would be a rebuke, or a suggestion of inferiority, or what not?—but she bridged it over as best she could with a jocose appellation like "Signor," "Monsieur," or "Mr. John Kendal" in full. "Jack" was impossible; "John" was worse,—yes, with a little nervous shudder, *much* worse.

He told her about Paris, to her fascination—she had never seen it,—about the boulevards and the cafés and the men's ateliers, and the vagrant pathos of student life there—he had known some clean bits of it,—and to all of this old story he gave such life as a word or a phrase can give. Even his repressions were full of meaning, and the best—she felt it was the best—he had to

offer her he offered in fewest words, letting her imagination riot with them. He described Lucien, and the American Colony. He made her laugh abundantly over the American amateur, as Lucien managed him,—they had no end of fun over these interesting, ingenious, and prodigal people in relation to Parisian professional circles. He touched on Nádíe Palicky lightly, and perhaps it was because Janet insisted upon an accentuation of the lines here—he had sent her a photograph of one of Nádíe's best things—that he refrained from mentioning Elfrida altogether. Elfrida, he thought, he would keep till another time. She would need so much explanation, she was too interesting to lug in now, it was getting late. Besides, Elfrida was an exhausting subject, and he was rather done.

CHAPTER XI.

INDIVIDUALLY, a large number of Royal Academicians pronounced John Kendal's work impertinent if not insulting, meaningless, affected, or flippant. Collectively, with a corporate opinion that might be discussed but could not be identified, they received it and hung it, smothering a distressful doubt, where it would be least likely to excite either the censure of the right-minded or the admiration of the unorthodox. The Grosvenor gave him a discreet appreciation, and the New received him with joy and thanksgiving. If he had gone to any of the Private Views, which temptation he firmly resisted, he would have heard the British public—for, after all, the British public is always well represented at a Private View—say discontentedly how much better it would

like his pictures if they were only a little more finished. He might even have had the cruel luck to hear one patron of the arts, who began by designing the pictorial advertisements for his own furniture polish, state that he would buy that twilight effect with the empty fields if only the trees in the foreground weren't so blurred. Other things, too, he might have heard that would have amused him more, as being less commonplace, but pleased him no better, said by people who cast furtive glances over their shoulders to see if anybody that might be the artist was within reach of their discriminating admiration; and here and there, if he had listened well, a vigorous word that meant recognition and reward. It was not that he did not long for the tritest word of comment from the oracle before which he had chosen to lay the fruit of his labours; indeed, he was so conscious of his desire to know this opinion, not over clever as he believed it, that he ran away on the evening of varnishing day. If he stayed he felt that he would inevitably compromise his dignity,

so he hid himself with some amiable people in Hampshire, who could be relied upon not to worry him, for a week. He did not deny himself the papers, however. They reached him in stacks, with the damp chill of the afternoon post upon them; and in their solid paragraphs he read the verdict of the British public written out in words of proper length, and much the same phrases that had done duty for Eastlake and Sir Martin Shee. Fortunately, the amiable people included some very young people, so young that they could properly compel Kendal to go into the fields with them and make cowslip balls, and some robust girls of eighteen and twenty who mutely demanded the pleasure of beating him at tennis every afternoon. He was able in this way to work off the depression that visited him daily with the damp odour of London art criticism, quite independently of its bias toward himself. He told himself that he had been let off fairly easily, though he winced considerably under the adulation of the *Daily Mercury*, and found himself breathing most freely when least was said

about him. The day of his triumph in the *Mercury* he made monstrous cowslip balls, and thought that the world had never been sufficiently congratulated upon possessing the ideal simplicity of children.

Thereafter, for two days nothing came, and he began to grow restless. Then the *Decade* made its weekly slovenly appearance, without a wrapper. He opened it with the accumulated interest of forty-eight hours, turned to "Fine Arts," and girded himself to receive the *Decade's* ideas. He read the first sentence twice: the article opened curiously for the *Decade*. He looked at the cover to see whether he had not been mistaken. Then he sat down beside the open window, where a fine rain came in and smote upon the page, and read it through, straining his eyes in the gathering darkness over the last paragraph. After that, he walked up and down the rooms, among the shadows, for half an hour, not ringing for lights because the scented darkness of the garden where the rain was dripping, and the half outlines of the things in the room, were so much more

grateful to his imagination as the *Decade's* critic had stimulated with the young mocking brilliant voice that spoke in the department of "Fine Arts." It stirred him all through. In the pleasure it gave him he refused to reflect how often it dismissed with contempt where it should have considered with respect, how it was sometimes inconsistent, sometimes exaggerated and obscure. He was wrapped in the delicacy and truth with which the critic translated into words the recognizable souls of a certain few pictures—it could not displease him that they were very few, since three of his were among them. When it spoke of these the voice was strong and gentle, with an uplifted tenderness, and all the suppressed suggestion that good pictures themselves have. It made their quality felt in the lines, and it spoke with a personal joy.

"A new note!" Kendal thought aloud; "a voice crying in the wilderness, by Jove! Wolff might have done it, if it had been in French, but Wolff would have been fairer, and more technical and less sympathetic."

A fine energy crept all through him, and burnt at his finger-ends. The desire to work seized him deliciously with the thrill of being understood, a longing to accomplish to the utmost of his limitations—he must reasonably suppose his limitations. Sometimes they were close and real, at this moment they were far-off and vague, and almost dissolved by the force of his joyous intention. He threw himself mentally upon a half-finished canvas that stood against the wall in Bryanston Street, and spent ten exalted minutes in finishing it. When it was done he found it ravishing, and raged because he could not decently leave for town before four o'clock next day. He worked off the time before dinner by putting his things together, and the amiable people had never found him so delightful as he was that evening. After amusing one of the robust young ladies for half an hour, at prodigious cost, he found himself comparing their conversation with the talk he might have had in the time with Elfrida Bell; and a fresh sense of injury visited him at having been high-

handedly debarred from that pleasure for so many weeks. It stayed with him and pricked him all the way to town next day. He was a fool, he thought, to have missed the chance of meeting her upon the opening days of the London exhibitions; she was sure to have gone, if it were only to scoff, and her scoffing would have been so amusing to listen to. He thought gloomily of the impossibility of finding her in London if she didn't wish to be found, and he concluded that he really wanted to see her, that he must see her soon—to show her that article.

The desire had not passed from him three days later, when the boy from below stairs brought him up a card. Kendal was in his shirt sleeves, and had just established a relation of great intimacy with an entirely new subject. Before the boy reached him he recognized with annoyance that it was a lady's card, and he took it between his thumb and his palette with the most brutal indifference.

“You are to say——” he began, and stopped. “Show the lady up,” he said in sub-

stitution, while his face cleared with a puzzled amusement, and he looked at the card again. It read "Miss Elfrida Bell," but the odd thing was down in one corner, where ran the statement in small square type, "*The Illustrated Age.*"

There was a sweet glory of May sunlight in the streets outside, and she seemed to bring some of it in with her, as well as the actual perfume of the bunch of violets which she wore in her belt. Her eyes, under the queerest of hats, were bright and soft; there was a faint colour in her cheeks. Her shapely hands were in grey gloves with long gauntlets, and in one of them she carried a business-like little black note-book.

She came in with a shy hesitation that became her very well, and as she approached their old understanding immediately arranged itself between them.

"I should be perfectly justified in sulking," he declared gaily, disencumbering a chair of a superannuated tin box of empty twisted tubes, "and asking you to what I might attribute the honour of this visit?" He put

up his eye-glass, and stared through it with an absurd affectation of dignified astonishment. "But I'll magnanimously admit that I am delighted to see you. I'll even lay aside my wounded sensibilities enough to ask you where you've been?"

"I?" faltered Elfrida, softly, with her wide-eyed smile, "oh!—as if that were of any consequence!" She stepped back a pace or two to look at an unpacked canvas, and her expression changed. "Ah," she said gravely, "how good it is to see that! I wish I could remember by myself so much—half so much—of the sunlight of that country. In three days of these fogs I had forgotten it. I mean the reality of it. Only a pale theory stayed with me. Now it comes back."

"Then you *have* been in London," he probed, while she looked wistfully at the fringe of a wood in Brittany that stood upon his canvas. Her eyes left the picture and wandered round the room.

"I?" she said again. "In London? Yes, I have been in London. How *splendidly* different you are!" she said, looking straight

at him as if she stated a falling of the thermometer or a quotation from the Stock Exchange. "But are you sure—*perfectly* sure," she went on with dainty emphasis, "that you can stay different? Aren't you the least bit afraid that in the end your work may become—pardon me—commercial, like the rest? Is there no danger?"

"I wish you would sit down," Kendal said ruefully. "I shouldn't feel it so much, perhaps, if you sat down. And pending my acknowledgment of a Londoner's sin in painting in London, it seems to me that you have put yourself under pretty much the same condemnation."

"I have not come to paint," Elfrida answered quickly. "I have put away the insanity of thinking I ever could. I told you that, I think, in a letter. But there are—other things. You may remember that you thought there were."

She spoke with so much repressed feeling that Kendal reproached himself with not having thought carefully enough about it to take her at her letter's word. He

picked up the card that announced her, and looked again at the lower left-hand corner.

"I do remember, but I don't understand. Is this one of them?" he asked.

Something, something absolutely unintentional and of the slightest quality, in his voice operated to lower her estimate of the announcement on the card, and she flushed a little.

"It's—it's a way," she said. "But it was stupid—bourgeois—of me to send up a card—such a card. With most of these people it is necessary; with you of course it was hideous. Give it to me, please," and she proceeded to tear it slowly into little bits. "You must pardon me," she went on, "but I thought—you know we are not in Paris now, and there might be people here. And then, after all, it explains me."

"Then I should like another," Kendal interrupted.

"I'm going to do a descriptive article for the *Age*—the editor wants to call it 'Through the Studios' or something of that sort—about the artists over here, and their

ways of working, and their places and their ideas and all that, and I thought, if you didn't mind, I should like to begin with you! Though it's rather like taking advantage."

"But are you going in for this sort of thing seriously? Isn't it an uncommon grind?" Kendal asked with hearty interest. "What made you think of it? Of course you may say any mortal thing you want to about me—though I call it treachery, your going over to the critics! I'm afraid you won't find anything very picturesque here? As you say, we're not in Paris."

"Oh yes, I shall!" she replied sweetly, ignoring his questions. "I like pipes, and cobwebs, and old coats hanging on a nail, and plenty of litter and dust and confusion. It's much better for work than tapestries, and old armour, and wood carvings."

Miss Bell did not open her little black note-book to record these things, however. Instead, she picked up a number of the *London Magazine*, and looked at the title of an article pencil-marked on the pale green cover. It was Janet Cardiff's article,

and Lady Halifax had marked it. Elfrida had read it before—it was a fanciful creation of the conditions of verse-making when Herrick wrote, very pleasurably ironical in its bearing upon more modern poetry-making. It had quite deserved the praise she gave it in the corner which the *Age* reserved for the magazines.

“I want you to understand,” she said slowly, “that it is only a way. I shall not be content to stick at this—ordinary kind of journalistic work. I shall aim at something better—something perhaps as good as that.” She held up the marked article. “I wonder if she realizes how fortunate she is—to appear between the same covers as Swinburne!”

“It is not fortune altogether,” Kendal answered. “She works hard.”

“Do you know her?—do you see her often? Will you tell her that there is somebody who takes a special delight in every word she writes?” asked Elfrida, impulsively. “But no, of course not! Why should she care? She must hear such things so often. Tell me,

though, what is she like, and particularly how old is she?"

Kendal had begun to paint again; it was a compliment he was able to pay only to a very few people. "I shall certainly repeat it to her," he said. "She can't hear such things often enough—nobody can. How shall I tell you what she is like? She is tall—about as tall as you are; and rather thin. She has a good colour, and nice hair and eyes."

"What coloured eyes?"

"Brown, I think. No—I don't know; but not blue. And good eyebrows—particularly good eyebrows."

"She must be plain," Elfrida thought, "if he has to dwell upon her eyebrows. And how old?" she asked again. "Much over thirty?"

"Oh dear no! not thirty. Twenty-four, I should say."

Elfrida's face fell perceptibly. "Twenty-four!" she exclaimed. "And I am already twenty. I shall never catch up to her in four years. Oh, you have made me so un-

happy! I thought she must be quite old—
—forty perhaps. I was prepared to venerate
her. But twenty-four, and good eyebrows!
It's too much."

Kendal laughed. "Oh, I say!" he exclaimed, jumping up, and bringing a journal from the other side of the room, "if you're going in for art criticism, here's something! Do you see the *Decade*? The *Decade's* article on the pictures in last week's number fairly brought me back to town." He held his brush between his teeth and found the place for her. "There! I don't know who did it; and it was the first thing Miss Cardiff asked me when I put in my appearance there yesterday, so she doesn't either, though she writes a good deal for the *Decade*."

Kendal had gone back to work, and did not see that Elfrida was making an effort of self-control, with a curious exaltation in her eyes. "I—I have seen this," she said presently.

"Capital, isn't it?"

"Miss Cardiff asked you who wrote it?" she repeated, hungrily,

“Yes, she commissioned me to find out, and, if he was respectable, to bring him there. Her father said I was to bring him, anyway. So I don’t propose to find out. The Cardiffs have burnt their fingers once or twice already handling obscure genius, and I won’t take the responsibility. But it’s adorably savage, isn’t it?”

“Do you really like it?” she asked. It was her first taste of success, and the savour was very sweet. But she was in an agony of desire to tell him, to tell him immediately, but gracefully, delicately, that she wrote it. How could she say it, and yet seem uneager, indifferent! But the occasion must not slip! It was a miserable moment.

“Immensely,” he replied.

“Then,” she said, with just a little more significance in her voice than she intended, “you would rather not find out?”

He turned and met her shining eyes. She smiled, and he had an instant of conviction.

“You!” he exclaimed,—“you did it! Really?”

She nodded, and he swiftly reflected upon

what he had said. "Please criticize," she begged impatiently.

"I can only advise you to follow your own example," he said gravely. "It's rather exuberantly cruel in places."

"Adorably savage, you *said*!"

"I wasn't criticizing then. And I suppose," he went on, with a shade of awkwardness, "I ought to thank you for all the charming things you put in about me."

"Ah," she returned, with a contemptuous pout and shrug, "don't say that!—it's like the others. But"—she clinched it notwithstanding, and rather quickly—"will you take me to see Miss Cardiff? I mean," she added, noting his look of consternation, "will you ask her if I may come? I forget—we are in London."

At this moment the boy from below stairs knocked with tea and cakes, little Italian cakes in iced jackets and paper boats. "Yes, certainly; yes, I will," said Kendal, staring at the tray, and trying to remember when he had ordered it; "but it's your plain duty to make us both some tea, and

eat as many of these pink and white things as you possibly can. They seem to have come down from heaven for you."

They ate and drank and talked, and were merry for quite twenty minutes. Elfrida opened her note-book, and threatened absurdities of detail for publication in the *Age*. He defied her, tilted his chair back, put his feet on a packing-box, and smoked a cigarette. He placed all the studies he had made after she left Paris before her, and as she finished the last but one of the Italian cakes they discussed these in the few words from which they both drew such large and satisfying meanings as do not lie at all in the vocabulary of outsiders. Elfrida felt the keenest pleasure of her whole life in the knowledge that Kendal was talking to her more seriously, more carefully, because of that piece of work in the *Decade*; the consciousness of it was like wine to her, freeing her thoughts and her lips. Kendal felt, too, that the plane of their relations was somehow altered. He was not sure that he liked the alteration. Already she

had grown less amusing, and the real *camaraderie* which she constantly suggested her desire for, he could not, at the bottom of his heart, truly tolerate with a woman. He was an artist, but he was also an Englishman, and he told himself that he must not let her get into the way of coming there. He felt an absurd inward irritation, which he did not analyze, that she should talk so well and be so charming, personally, at the same time.

Elfrida, still in the flush of her elation, was putting on her gloves to go, when the room resounded to a masterful double rap. The door almost simultaneously opened far enough to disclose a substantial gloved hand upon the outer handle, and in the tones of confident aggression which habit has given to many middle-aged ladies, a feminine voice said, "May we come in?"

It is not probable that Lady Halifax had ever been so silently, surely, and swiftly damned before. In the fraction of an instant that followed, Kendal glanced at the dismantled tray, and felt that the situation

was atrocious. He had just time to put his foot upon his half-smoked cigarette, and to force pretence of unconcern into his "Come in!" when the lady and her daughter entered with something of unceremoniousness.

"Those are appalling stairs"—Lady Halifax observed Elfrida, and came to an instant's astonished halt—"of yours, Mr. Kendal,—appalling!" Then, as Kendal shook hands with Miss Halifax, she faced round upon him in a manner which said definitely, "Explain!" and behind her sharp, good-natured little eyes, Kendal read, "if it is possible." He looked at Elfrida in the silent hope that she would go, but she appeared to have no such intention. He was pushed to a momentary wish that she had got into the cupboard, which he dismissed, turning a deeper brick colour as it came and went. Elfrida was looking up with calm inquiry, buttoning a last glove button.

"Lady Halifax," he said, seeing nothing else for it, "this is Miss Bell, from America, a fellow-student in Paris. Miss

Bell has deserted art for literature, though," he went on bravely, noting an immediate change in his visitor's expression, and the fact that her acknowledgment was quite as polite as was necessary. "She has done me the honour to look me up this afternoon in the formidable character of a representative of the press."

Lady Halifax looked as if the explanation were quite acceptable, though she reserved the right of criticism. Elfrida took the first word, smiling prettily straight into Lady Halifax's face.

"Mr. Kendal pretends to be very much frightened," she said, with pleasant modest coolness, and looked at Kendal.

"From America," Lady Halifax repeated, as if for the comfort of the assurance. "I am sure it is a great advantage nowadays to have been brought up in America." This was quite as delicately as Lady Halifax could possibly manage to inform Kendal that she understood the situation.

Miss Halifax was looking absorbedly at Elfrida. "Are you really a journalist?"

Miss Halifax asked. "How nice! I didn't know there were any ladies on the London press except, of course, the fashion papers; but that isn't quite the same, is it?"

When Miss Halifax said, "How nice!" it indicated a strong degree of interest. The threads of Miss Halifax's imagination were perpetually twisting themselves about incidents that had the least unusualness, and here was a most unusual incident, with beauty and genius thrown in. Whether she could approve of it or not in connection with Kendal, Miss Halifax would decide afterwards. She told herself that she ought to be sufficiently devoted to Kendal to be magnanimous about his friends. Her six years of seniority gave her the candour to confess that she was devoted to Kendal—to his artistic personality, that is, and to his pictures. While Kendal turned a still uncomfortable back upon them, showing Lady Halifax what he had done since she had been there last—she was always pitiless in her demands for results—Elfrida talked a little about "the press" to Miss Halifax. Very lightly and gracefully she talked about

it, so lightly and gracefully that Miss Halifax obtained an impression, which she has never lost, that journalism for a woman had ideal attractions, and privately resolved, if ever she were thrown upon the bleak world, to take it up. As the others turned towards them again, Elfrida noticed the conscience-stricken glance which Kendal gave to the tea-tray.

“ Oh,” she said, with a slight enhancement of her pretty Parisian gurgle, “ I am very guilty—you must allow me to say that I am very guilty indeed ! Mr. Kendal did not expect to see me to-day, and in his surprise he permitted me to eat up all the cakes ! I am so sorry ! Are there no more—anywhere ? ” she asked Kendal, with such a gay pretence of tragic grief that they all laughed together.

She went away then, and while they waited for a fresh supply of tea, Kendal did his best to satisfy the curiosity of the Halifaxes about her. He was so more than thankful that she had convinced them that she was a person about whom it was proper to be curious.

CHAPTER XII.

IT was Arthur Rattray who generally did the art criticism for the *Decade*, and when a temporary indisposition interfered between Mr. Rattray and his duty, early in May, he had acquired so much respect for Elfrida's opinion in artistic matters, and so much goodwill toward her personally, that he wrote and asked her to undertake it for him with considerable pleasure. This respect and regard had dawned upon him gradually, from various sources, in spite of the fact that the Latin Quarter article had not been a particular success. That, to do Miss Bell justice, as Mr. Rattray said in mentioning the matter to the editor-in-chief, was not so much the fault of the article as the fault of their public. Miss Bell wrote the graphic, naked truth about the Latin Quarter. Even

after Rattray had sent her copy back to be amended for the third time, she did not seem able to realize that their public wouldn't stand *unions libres* when not served up with a moral purpose — that no artistic apology for them would do. In the end therefore, Rattray was obliged to mutilate the article himself and to neutralize it here and there. He was justified in taking the trouble, for it was matter they wanted on account of some expensive drawings of the locality that had been in hand a long time. Even then the editor-in-chief had grumbled at its "tone," though the wrath of the editor-in-chief was nothing to Miss Bell's. Mr. Rattray could not remember ever having had before a conversation with a contributor which approached in liveliness or interest the one he sustained with Miss Bell the day after her copy appeared. If he imparted some ideas upon expediency he received some upon obligation to artistic truth, which he henceforth associated with Elfrida's expressive eyes and what he called her foreign accent. On the whole, therefore, the conversation was agreeable, and it left him with

the impression that Miss Bell, under proper guidance, could very possibly do some fresh, unconventional work for the *Age*. Freshness and unconventionality for the *Age* was what Mr. Rattray sought as they seek the jewel in the serpent's head in the far East. He talked to the editor-in-chief about it, mentioning the increasing lot of things concerning women that had to be touched, which only a woman could treat "from the inside;" and the editor-in-chief agreed sulkily, because experience told him it was best to agree with Mr. Rattray, that Miss Bell should be taken on the staff on trial, at two pounds a week. "But the paper doesn't want a female Zola," he growled, "you can tell her that."

Rattray did not tell her precisely that, but he explained the situation so that she quite understood it, the next afternoon when he called to talk the matter over with her. He could not ask her to come to the office to discuss it, he said; they were so full up, they had really no place to receive a lady. And he apologized for his hat, which was not a

silk one, in the uncertain way of a man who has heard of the proprieties in these things. She made him tea with her samovar, and she talked to him about Parisian journalism and the Parisian stage, in a way that made her a further discovery to him; and his mind, hitherto wholly devoted to the service of the *Illustrated Age*, received an impetus in a new direction.

When he had gone Elfrida laughed a little, silently, thinking first of this, for it was quite plain to her. Then, contrasting what the *Age* wanted her to write with her ideal of journalistic literature, she stated to Buddha that it was "worse than *panade*." "But it means two pounds a week, Buddha," she said—"fifty francs! Do you understand that? It means that we shall be able to stay here, in the world—that I shall not be obliged to take you to Sparta. You don't know, Buddha, how you would *loathe* Sparta! But understand, it is at that price that we are going to despise ourselves for a while—not for the two pounds!"

And next day she was sent to report a distribution of diplomas to graduating nurses by the Princess of Wales.

Buddha was not an adequate confidant. Elfrida found him capable of absorbing her emotions indefinitely, but his still smile was not always responsive enough. So she made a little feast, and asked Golightly Ticke to tea, the Sunday after the Saturday that made her a salaried member of the London press. Golightly's felicitations were sincere and spasmodically sympathetic, but he found it impossible to conceal the fact that of late the world had not smiled equally upon him. In spite of the dramatic fervour with which the part of James Jones, a solicitor's clerk, had been rendered every evening, the piece at the Princess's had come to an unprofitable close, the theatre had been leased to an American Company, Phyllis had gone upon tour, and Mr. Ticke's abilities were at the service of chance. By the time he had reached his second cigarette, he was so sunk in cynicism that Elfrida applied herself delicately to discover these facts. Golightly

made an elaborate effort to put her off. He threw his head back in his chair, and watched the faint rings of his cigarette curling into indistinguishability against the ceiling, and said that he was only the dust that blew about the narrow streets of the world, and why should she care to know which way the wind took him? Lighting his third, he said as bitterly as that engrossment would permit him, that the sooner—puff—it was over—puff—the sooner—puff—to sleep; and when the lighting was quite satisfactorily accomplished, he laughed harshly.

“I shall think,” said Elfrida, earnestly, “if you do not tell me how things are with you, since they are bad, that you are not a true Bohemian—that you have scruples!”

“You know better—at least I hope you do—than to charge me with that,” Golightly returned with an inflection full of reproachful meaning. “I—I drank myself to sleep last night, Miss Bell. When the candle flickered out, I thought that it was all over—curious sensation. This morning,” he

added, looking through his half-closed eyelashes with sardonic stage effect, "I wished it had been."

"Tell me," Elfrida insisted gently.

Mr. Ticke then told her, looking attentively at his long thin fingers. He told her tersely, it did not take long; and in the end he doubled up his hand and pulled a crumpled cuff down over it.

"To me," he said, "a thing like that represents the worst of it. When I look at that I feel capable of crime. I don't know whether you'll understand, but the consideration of what my finer self suffers through sordidness of this sort, sometimes makes me think that to rob a bank would be an act of virtue."

"I understand," said Elfrida.

"Washerwomen, as a class, are callous; I suppose the alkalies they use finally penetrate to their souls. I said to mine last Thursday, 'But I must be clean, Mrs. Binkley,' and the creature replied, 'I don't see at all, Mr. Ticks'—she has an odious habit of calling me Mr. Ticks—'why you shouldn't go dirty

occasional.' She seemed to think she had made a joke."

"They live to be paid," Elfrida said, with hard philosophy. And then she questioned him delicately about his play. Could she induce him to show it to her, some day? Her opinion was worth nothing really—oh no, absolutely nothing—but it would be a pleasure, if Golightly were *sure* he didn't mind.

Golightly found it difficult in selecting phrases repressive enough to be artistic, in which to tell her that he would be delighted.

When Mr. Ticke came in that evening he found upon his dressing-table a thick square envelope addressed to him in Elfrida's suggestive hand. With his finger and thumb, he immediately detected a round hardness in one corner; and he took some pains to open the letter so that nothing should fall out. He postponed the pleasure of reading it until he had carefully extracted the two ten-shilling pieces, divested them of their bits of tissue paper, and put them in his waist-

coat pocket. Then he held the letter nearer to the candle and read—

“I have thought about this for a whole hour. You must believe, please, that it is no vulgar impulse. I acknowledge it to be a very serious liberty, and in taking it, I rely upon not having misinterpreted the scope of the freedom which exists between us. In Bohemia—our country—one may share one’s luck with a friend, *n’est-ce pas*? I will not ask to be forgiven.”

“Nice girl,” said Mr. Golightly Ticke, taking off his boots. He went to bed rather resentfully conscious of the difference there was in the benefactions of Miss Phyllis Fane.

Shortly after this Mr. Ticke’s own luck mended, and on two different occasions Elfrida found a bunch of daffodils outside her door in the morning, that made a mute and graceful acknowledgment of the financial bond Mr. Ticke did not dream of offering to materialize in any other way. He felt his gratitude finely. It suggested to him a number of little directions in which he could

make himself useful to Miss Bell, putting aside entirely the question of repayment. One of these resolved itself into an invitation from the Arcadia Club, of which Mr. Ticke was a member in impressive arrears, to their monthly *soirée* in the Landscapists' rooms in Bond Street. The Arcadia Club had the most liberal scope of any in London, he told Elfrida, and included the most interesting people. Painters belonged to it, and sculptors, actors, novelists, musicians, journalists—perhaps above all journalists. A great many ladies were members—Elfrida would see—and they were always glad to welcome a new personality. The club recognized how the world had run to types, and how scarce and valuable personalities were in consequence. It was not a particularly conventional club, but he would arrange that. If Elfrida would accept his escort, Mrs. Tommy Morrow would meet her in the dressing-room, as a concession to the prejudices of society.

“Mrs. Tommy is a brilliant woman in her way,” Mr. Ticke added. “She edits *The Boudoir*—I might say she created *The*

Boudoir. They call her the Queen of Arcadia. She has a great deal of manner."

"What does Mr. Tommy Morrow do?" Elfrida asked.

But Golightly could not inform her as to Mr. Tommy Morrow's occupation.

The rooms were half full when they arrived, and as the man in livery announced them, "Mrs. Morrow, Miss Bell, and Mr. Golightly Ticke," it seemed to Elfrida that everybody turned simultaneously to look. There was nobody to receive them; the man in livery published them, as it were, to the company, which she felt to be a more effective mode of entering society, when it was the society of the arts. She could not possibly help being aware that a great many people were looking in her direction over Mrs. Tommy Morrow's shoulder. Presently it became obvious that Mr. Tommy Morrow was also aware of it. The shoulder was a very feminine shoulder, with long lines curving forward into the sulphur-coloured gown that met them not too prematurely. Mrs. Tommy Morrow insisted upon her shoulder, and upon

her neck, which was short behind but long in front, in effect, and curved up to a chin which was somewhat too persistently thrust forward. Mrs. Tommy had a pretty face with an imperious expression—"Just the face," as Golightly murmured to Elfrida, "to run *The Boudoir*." She seemed to know everybody, bowed right and left with varying degrees of cordiality, and said sharply, "No shop to-night!" to a thin young woman in a high black silk, who came up to her, exclaiming, "Oh, Mrs. Morrow, that function at Sandringham has been postponed."

Presently Mrs. Morrow's royal progress was interrupted by a gentleman who wished to present Signor Georgiadi—"the star of the evening," Golightly said hurriedly to Elfrida. Mrs. Morrow was very gracious, but the little fat Italian with the long hair and drooping eyelids was atrociously embarrassed to respond to her compliments in English. He struggled so violently that Mrs. Morrow began to smile with a compassionate patronage which turned him a distressing terra cotta. Elfrida looked on for a few minutes, and

then, as one of the group, she said quietly in French, "And Italian opera in England, how do you find it, signor?" The Italian thanked her with every feature of his expressive countenance, and burst with polite enthusiasm into his opinion of the Albert Hall concerts. When he discovered Elfrida to be an American, and therefore not specially susceptible to praise of English classical interpretations, he allowed himself to become critical, and their talk increased in liveliness and amiability.

Mrs. Morrow listened with an appreciative air for a few minutes, playing with her fan, then she turned to Mr. Ticke—

"Golightly," she said acidly, "I'm dying of thirst. You shall take me to the refreshment-room."

So the star of the evening was abandoned to Elfrida, and, finding in her a refuge from the dreadful English lady, he clung to her. She was so occupied with him in this character that almost all the other distinguished people who attended the *soirée* of the Arcadia Club escaped her. Golightly asked her re-

proachfully afterwards how he could possibly have pointed them out to her, absorbed as she was—and some of them would have been so pleased to be introduced to her. She met a few notwithstanding; they were chiefly unmarried ladies of middle age who immediately mentioned the paper they were connected with, and one or two of them, learning that she was a new-comer, kindly gave her their cards and asked her to come and see them any second Tuesday. They had indefinite and primitive ideas of doing their hair, and they were certainly *mal tournée*, but Elfrida saw that she made a novel impression upon them, that they would remember her and talk of her. Seeing that other things became less noteworthy. She observed, however, that these ladies were more or less emancipated, on easy terms with the facts of life, free from the prejudices that tied the souls of the people she saw shopping at the Stores, for instance. That, and a familiarity with the exigencies of copy at short notice, was discernible in the way they talked and looked about them; and

the readiness with which each produced a pencil and a card suggested that she might have decorated the staff of her journal an appreciable number of years, if that supposition had not been forbidden by the fact that the feminine element in journalism is of comparatively recent introduction. Elfrida wondered what they had occupied themselves with before. It did not detract from her sense of the success of the evening—Golightly Ticke went about telling everybody that she was the new American writer on the *Age*—to feel herself altogether the youngest person present, and manifestly the most effectively dressed, in her cloudy black net and daffodils. Her spirits rose as she looked at the other women with a keen instinct that assured her she would win, if it were only a matter of a race with *them*. She had never had the feeling in any security before; it lifted her and carried her on in a wave of exhilaration. Golightly Ticke, taking her in turn to the buffet for lemonade and a sandwich, told her that he knew she would enjoy it—she must be enjoying it, she looked in

such capital form. It was the first time she had been near the buffet, so she had not had the opportunity of observing how important a feature the lemonade and sandwiches formed in the entertainment of the evening—how persistently the representatives of the arts, with varying number of buttons off their gloves, returned to this light refreshment.

Elfrida thanked Mrs. Tommy Morrow very sweetly for her chaperonage in the cloak-room when the hour of departure came.

“Well,” said Mrs. Morrow, “you can say you have seen a characteristic London literary gathering.”

“Yes, thanks,” said Elfrida; and then, looking about her for a commonplace, “How much taller the women seem to be than the men!” she remarked.

“Yes,” returned Mrs. Tommy Morrow. “Du Maurier drew attention to that in *Punch* some time ago.”

CHAPTER XIII.

JANET CARDIFF, running downstairs to the drawing-room from the top story of the house in Kensington Square, with the knowledge that a new American girl who wrote very clever things about pictures awaited her there, tried to remember just what sort of description John Kendal had given of her visitor. Her recollection was vague as to detail; she could not anticipate a single point with certainty, perhaps because she had not paid particular attention at the time. She had been given a distinct impression that she might expect to be interested, however, which accounted for her running downstairs. Nothing hastened Janet Cardiff's footsteps more than the prospect of anybody interesting. She and her father declared that it was their great misfortune to be thoroughly

respectable, it cut them off from so much. It was in particular the girl's complaint against their life that humanity, as they knew it, was rather a neutral-tinted, carefully woven fabric too largely "machine-made," as she told herself with a discontent which the various Fellows of the Royal Society and members of the Athenæum Club with whom the Cardiffs were in the habit of dining could hardly have thought themselves capable of inspiring. It seemed to Janet that nobody crossed their path until his or her reputation was made, and that by the time people had made their reputations they succumbed to them and became uninteresting.

She told herself at once that nothing Kendal could have said would have prepared her for this American, and that certainly nothing she had seen or read of other Americans did. Elfrida was standing beside the open window looking out. As Janet came in, a breeze wavered through and lifted the fluffy hair about her visitor's forehead, and the scent of the growing things in the little square came with it into the room. She

turned slowly, with grave wide eyes and a plaintive indrawing of her pretty underlip, and held out three full-blown gracious Marechal Neil roses on long slender stems.

“I have brought you these,” she said, with a charming effect of simplicity, “to make me welcome. There was no reason—none whatever—why I should be welcome, so I made one. You will not be angry—perhaps?”

Janet banished her conventional “Very glad to see you” instantly. She took the roses with a quick thrill of pleasure. Afterwards she told herself that she was not touched, not in the least, she did not quite know why. But she freely acknowledged that she was more than amused.

“How charming of you!” she said. “But I have to thank you for coming as well. Now let us shake hands, or we shan’t feel properly acquainted.”

Janet detected a half-tone of patronage in her voice, and fell into a rage with herself because of it. She looked at Elfrida to note a possible resentment, but there was none. If she had looked a trifle more sharply, she

might have observed a subtler patronage in the little smile her visitor received this commonplace with; but, like the other, she was too much occupied in considering her personal effect. She had become suddenly desirous that it should be a good one.

Elfrida went on in the personal key. "I suppose you are very tired of hearing such things," she said, "but I owe you so much."

This was not quite justifiable, for Miss Cardiff was only a successful writer in the magazines, whose name was very familiar to other people who wrote in them, and had a pleasant association for the reading public. It was by no means fame—she would have been the first to laugh at the magniloquence of the word in any personal connection. For her father she would accept a measure of it, and only deplored that the lack of public interest in Persian made the measure small. She had never confessed to a soul how largely she herself was unacquainted with his books, and how considerably her knowledge of her father's specialty was covered

by the opinion that Persian was a very decorative character. She could not let Elfrida suppose that she thought this anything but a politeness.

“Oh, thanks — impossible !” she cried gaily ; “indeed, I assure you it is months since I heard anything so agreeable,” which was also a departure from the strictest verity.

“But, truly ! I’m afraid I am very clumsy,” Elfrida added with a pretty dignity, “but I should like to assure you of that.”

“If you have allowed me to amuse you now and then for half an hour, it has been very good of you,” Janet returned, looking at Miss Bell with rather more curious interest than she thought it polite to show. It began to seem to her, however, that the conventional side of the occasion was not obvious from any point of view. “You are an American, aren’t you ?” she asked. “Mr. Kendal told me so. I suppose one oughtn’t to say that one would like to be an American. But you have such a pull !—I know I should like living there.”

Elfrida gave herself the effect of considering the matter earnestly. It flitted, really, over the surface of her mind, which was engaged in absorbing Janet, and the room, and the situation.

“Perhaps it is better to be born in America than in—most places,” she said, with a half-glance at the prim square outside. “It gives you a point of view that is—splendid.” In hesitating this way before her adjectives, she always made her listeners doubly attentive to what she had to say. “And having been deprived of so much that you have over here, we like England better, perhaps, when we get it, than you do. But nobody would live in constant deprivation. No; you wouldn’t like living there. Except in New York, and, oh, I should say Santa Barbara, and New Orleans, perhaps, the life over there is—infernal.”

“You are like a shower-bath,” said Janet to herself, but the shower-bath had no palpable effect upon her. “What have we that is so important that you haven’t got?” she asked.

“Quantities of things.” Elfrida hesitated, not absolutely sure of the wisdom of her example. Then she ventured it. “The picturesqueness of society—your duchesses and your women in the greengrocers’ shops.” It was not wise, she saw instantly.

“Really? It is so difficult to understand that duchesses are interesting—out of novels, and the greengrocers’ wives are a good deal alike too, aren’t they?”

“It’s the contrast. You see, our duchesses were greengrocers’ wives the day before yesterday, and our greengrocers’ wives subscribe to the magazines. It’s all mixed up, and there are no high lights anywhere. You move before us in a sort of panoramic pageant,” Elfrida went on, determined to redeem her point, “with your Queen and Empress of India—she ought to be riding on an elephant, oughtn’t she?—in front, and all your princes and nobles with their swords drawn to protect her. Then your upper classes and your upper middle classes, walking stiffly two and two; and then your lower middle classes with large families, dropping

their *h's*; and then your hideous people from the slums. And besides," she added, with prettily repressed enthusiasm, "there is the shadowy procession of all the people that have gone before, and we can see that you are a good deal like them, though they are more interesting still. It is very pictorial——" She stopped suddenly and consciously, as if she had said too much, and Janet felt that she was suggestively apologized to.

"Doesn't the phenomenal squash make up for all that?" she asked. "It would to me. I'm dying to see the phenomenal squash, and the prodigious water-melon, and——"

"And the Falls of Niagara?" Elfrida put in, with the faintest turning down of the corners of her mouth. "I'm afraid our wonders are chiefly natural, and largely vegetable, as you say."

"But they are wonders. Everything here has been measured so many times. Besides, haven't you got the Elevated Railway and a statue of Liberty, and the 'Jeanne d'Arc,' and W. D. Howells, to say nothing of a whole

string of poets—good grey poets, that wear beards and laurels, and fanciful young ones that dance in garlands on the back pages of *The Century*? Oh, I know them all—the dear things! and I'm quite sure their ideas are indigenous to the soil!”

Elfrida let her eyes tell her appreciation, and also the fact that she would take courage that she was gaining confidence.

“I'm glad you like them,” she said. “Howells would do if he would stop writing about virtuous sewing girls, and give us some real *romans psychologiques*. But he is too much afraid of soiling his hands, that monsieur; his *bêtes humaines* are always conventionalized, and generally come out at the end wearing the halo of the redeemed. He always reminds me of Cruikshank's picture of the ghost being put out by the extinguisher in the ‘Christmas Carol.’ His genius is the ghost, and conventionality is the extinguisher. But it is genius, so it's a pity.”

“It seems to me that Howells deals honestly with his materials,” Janet said,

instinctively stilling the jar of Elfrida's regardless note. She was so pretty, this new creature, and she had such original ways. Janet must let her talk about *romans psychologiques*, or worse things if she wanted to. "To me he has a tremendous appearance of sincerity, psychological and other. But do you know I don't think the English or American people are exactly calculated to offer the sort of material you mean. The *bête* is too conscious of his moral fibre when he's respectable; and when he isn't respectable he doesn't commit picturesque crimes—he steals and boozes. I dare say he's bestial enough, but pure unrelieved filth can't be transmuted into literature, and as a people we're perfectly devoid of that extraordinary artistic nature that it makes such a foil for in the Latins. That is really the only excuse the naturalists have!"

"Excuse!" Elfrida repeated, with a bewildered look. "You had Wainwright!" she added hastily.

"*Nous nous en félicitons!* We've got him still—in Madame Tussaud's!" cried Janet.

“He poisoned for money, in cold blood—not exactly an artistic vice! Oh, *he* won’t do!” she laughed triumphantly, “if he did write charming things about the Renaissance! Besides, he illustrates my case; amongst us he was a phenomenon, like the elephant-headed man. Phenomena are for the scientists. You don’t mean to tell me that any fiction that pretends to call itself artistic has a right to touch them?”

By this time they had absolutely forgotten that up to twenty minutes ago they had never seen each other before. Already they had mutely and consciously begun to rejoice that they had come together, already each of them promised herself the exploration of the other’s nature with the preliminary idea that it would be a satisfying, at least an interesting process. The impulse made Elfrida almost natural, and Janet perceived this with quick self-congratulation. Already she had made up her mind that this manner was a pretty mask which it would be her business to remove.

“But—but you’re not in it!” Elfrida returned. “Pardon me, but you’re not *there*, you know! Art has no ideal but truth, and to conventionalize truth is to damn it! In the most commonplace material there is always truth, but here they conventionalize it out of all——”

“Oh!” cried Janet. “We’re a conventional people, I assure you, Miss Bell. And so are you, for how could you change your spots in a hundred years? The material here is conventional. Daudet couldn’t have written for us. Our wicked women are too inglorious. Now, ‘Sappho’——” Miss Cardiff stopped at the ringing of the doorbell. “Oh!” she said. “Here is my father. You will let me give you a cup of tea now, won’t you?” The maid was bringing in the tray. “I should like you to meet my father.”

Lawrence Cardiff’s grasp was on the door-handle almost as she spoke. Seeing Elfrida, he involuntarily put up his hand to settle the back of his coat-collar—these little middle-aged ways were growing upon him—and shook hands with her, as Janet introduced

them, with the courtly impenetrable agreeableness that always provoked curiosity about him in strangers, and often led to his being taken for somebody more important than he was—usually somebody in politics. Elfrida saw that he was quite different from her conception of a University professor with a reputation in Persian and a clever daughter of twenty-four. He was straight and slender, for one thing; he had gay, inquiring eyes, and fair hair just beginning to show grey where the ends were brushed back; and Elfrida immediately became aware that his features were as modern and as mobile as possible. She had a moment of indecision and surprise—indecision as to the most effective way of presenting herself, and surprise that it should be necessary to decide upon any way. It had never occurred to her that a gentleman who had won scientific celebrity by digging about Arabic roots, and who had contributed a daughter like Janet to the popular magazines, could claim anything of her beyond a highly respectful consideration. In moments when

she hoped to know the Cardiffs well she had pictured herself doing little graceful acts of politeness towards this paternal person—acts connected with his spectacles, his *Athenian*, his footstool. But apparently she had to meet a knight and not a pawn.

She was hardly aware of taking counsel with herself, and the way she abandoned her hesitations, and what Janet was inwardly calling her Burne-Jonesisms, had all the effect of an excess of unconsciousness. Janet Cardiff watched it with delight. “But why,” she asked herself in wonder, “should she have been so affected—if it was affectation—with *me*?” She would decide whether it was or was not afterwards, she thought. Meanwhile she was glad her father had thought of saying something nice about the art criticism in the *Decade*; he was putting it so much better than she could, and it would do for both of them.

“You paint yourself, I fancy?” Mr. Cardiff was saying lightly.

There was no answer for an instant, or perhaps three. Elfrida was looking down.

Presently she raised her eyes, and they were larger than ever, and wet.

“No,” she said a little tensely; “I have tried”—“trr-hied,” she pronounced it—“but—but I cannot.”

Lawrence Cardiff looked at his teaspoon in a considering way, and Janet reflected, not without indignation, that this was the manner in which people who cared for them might be expected to speak of the dead. But Elfrida cut short the reflection by turning to her brightly.

“When Mr. Cardiff came in,” she said, “you were telling me why a Daudet could not write about the English. It was something about ‘Sappho.’” Mr. Cardiff looked up curiously, and Janet, glancing in her father’s direction, reddened. Did this strange young woman not realize that it was impossible to discuss beings like “Sappho” with one’s father in the room?

“It seems to me it is the exception in that class, as in all classes, that rewards interest,” Elfrida continued.

“That rewards interest?” What might she not say next?

“Yes,” interrupted Janet, desperately, “but then my father came in and changed the subject of our conversation. Where are you living, Miss Bell?”

“Near Fleet Street,” said Elfrida, rising. “I find the locality most interesting, when I can see it. I can patronize the Roman baths, and lunch at Dr. Johnson’s pet tavern, and attend service in the church of the real Templars if I like. It is delightful. I did go to the Templar church a fortnight ago,” she added, “and I saw such a horrible thing that I am not sure that I will go again. There is a beautiful old Crusader lying there in stone, and on his feet a man who sat near had hung his silk hat! And nobody interfered! Why do you laugh?”

When she had fairly gone, Lawrence and Janet Cardiff looked at one another, and smiled.

“Well,” cried Janet, “it’s a find, isn’t it, daddy?”

Her father shrugged his shoulders. His manner said that he was not pleased, but Janet found a tone in his voice that told

her the impression of Elfrida had not been altogether distasteful.

“*Fin de siècle*,” he said.

“Perhaps,” Janet answered, looking out of the window, “a little *fin de siècle*.”

“Did you notice,” asked Lawrence Cardiff, “that she didn’t tell you where she was living?”

“Didn’t she? Neither she did. But we can easily find out from John Kendal,”

CHAPTER XIV.

KENDAL hardly admitted to himself that his acquaintance with Elfrida had gone beyond the point of impartial observation. The proof of its impartiality, if he had thought of seeking it, would have appeared to him to lie in the fact that he found her, in her personality, her ideas and her effects, to be damaged by London. The conventionality—Kendal's careless generalization preferred a broad term—of the place made her extreme in every way, and it had recently come to be a conclusion with him that English conventionality, in moderation, was not wholly to be smiled at. Returning to it, its protectiveness had impressed him strongly, and he had a comforting sense of the responsibility it imposed upon society. Paris and the Quartier stood out against it in his mind like some-

thing full of light and colour and transient passion on the stage ; something to be remembered with recurring thrills of keen satisfaction and to be seen again. It had been more than this, he acknowledged, for he had brought out of it an element that lightened his life and vitalized his work, and gave an element of joyousness to his imagination—it was certain that he would go back there. And Miss Bell had been in it and of it—so much in it and of it that he felt impatient with her for permitting herself to be herself in any other environment. He asked himself why she could not see that she was crudely at variance with all colour and atmosphere and law in her present one, and he speculated as to the propriety of telling her so, of advising her outright as to the expediency, in her own interest, of being other than herself in London. That was what it came to, he reflected in deciding that he could not do this if the girl's convictions and motives and aims were real, and he was beginning to think they were real. And although he had found himself at liberty to say to her things that

were harder to hear, he felt a curious repugnance to giving her any inkling of what he thought about this; it would be a hideous thing to do, he concluded, an unforgivable thing, and an actual hurt. Kendal had for women the readiest consideration, and though one of the odd things he found in Elfrida was the slight degree to which she evoked it in him, he recoiled instinctively from any reasoned action which would distress her.

But his sense of her inconsistency with British institutions—at least he fancied it was that—led him to discourage somewhat, in the highest way, Miss Halifax's interested inquiries about her. The inquiries suggested dimly that eccentricity and obscurity might be overlooked in any one whose personality really had a value for Mr. Kendal, and made an attempt which was heroic, considering the delicacy of Miss Halifax's scruples, to measure his appreciation of Miss Bell as a writer—to Miss Halifax the word wore a halo—and as an individual. If she did not succeed, it was partly because he had not himself quite decided whether Elfrida in London was de-

lightful or intolerable, and partly because he had no desire to be complicated in social relations which, he told himself, must be either ludicrous or insincere.

The Halifaxes were not in any sense literary; their proper pretensions to that sort of society were buried with Sir William, who had been editor of the *Brown Quarterly* in his day, and many other things. They had inherited his friends as they had inherited his manuscripts, and, in spite of a grievous inability to edit either of them, they held to one legacy as fast as to the other. Kendal thought with a somewhat repelled amusement of any attempt of theirs to assimilate Elfrida. It was different with the Cardiffs, but even under their enthusiastic encouragement he was disinclined to be anything but discreet and cautious about Miss Bell. In one way and another she was at all events a young lady of potentialities, he reflected; and, with a view to their effect among one's friends, it might be as well to understand them. He even went so far as to say to himself that Janet was such a

thoroughly nice girl as she was; and then he smiled inwardly at the thought of how angry she would be at the thought of his putting any prudish considerations on her account into the balance against an interesting acquaintance. He had, nevertheless, a distinct satisfaction in the fact that it was really circumstances, in the shape of the *Decade* article, that had brought them together, and that he could hardly charge himself with being more than an irresponsible agent in the matter.

Under the influence of such considerations Kendal did not write to Elfrida at the *Age* office asking her address, as he had immediately resolved to do when he discovered that she had gone away without telling him where he might find her. It seemed to him that he could not very well see her at her lodgings. And the pleasure of coming upon her suddenly, as she closed the door of the *Age* behind her and stepped out into Fleet Street a fortnight later, overcame him too quickly to permit him to reflect that he was yielding to an opposite impulse in asking her

to dine with him at Baliero's, as they might have done in Paris. It was an unlooked-for opportunity, and it roused a desire which he had not lately been calculating upon, a desire to talk with her about all sorts of things, to feel the exhilaration of her single-mindedness, to find out more about her, to guess at the meanings behind her eyes.

If any privileged cynic had taken the chance to ask him whether he found them expressive of purely abstract significance, Kendal would have answered affirmatively in all honesty. And he would have added a confession of his curiosity to discover what she was capable of, if she was capable of anything—which he considered legitimate enough. At the moment, however, he had no time to think of anything but an inducement, and he dashed through whole pickets of scruples to find one. "They give one such capital strawberry ices at Baliero's," he begged her to believe.

His resolutions did not even reassert themselves when she refused. He was conscious only that it was a bore that she

should refuse, and very inconsistent—hadn't she often dined with him at the Café Florian? His gratification was considerable when she added, "They smoke there, you know," and it became obvious, by whatever curious process of reasoning she arrived at it, that it was Baliero's restaurant she objected to, and not his society.

"Well," he urged, "there are plenty of places where they don't smoke, though it didn't occur to me that——"

"Oh," she laughed, "but you must allow it to occur to you;" and she put her finger on her lip.

Considering their solitariness in the crowd, he thought there was no reason why he should not say that he was under the impression that she liked the smell of tobacco.

"There *are* other places," she went on. "There is a sweet little green and white place like a dairy in Oxford Street, that calls itself the 'Hyacinth,' which is sacred to ladies and to gentlemen properly chaperoned. If you would invite me to dine with you there I should like it very much."

“ Anywhere ! ” he said. He accepted her proposal to dine at the Hyacinth with the same unquestioning pleasure which he would have had in accepting her proposal to dine at the top of the Monument, that evening ; but he felt an undue perplexity at its terms, which was vaguely disturbing. How could it possibly matter ! Did she suppose that she advanced palpably nearer to the proprieties in dining with him in one place rather than the other ? There was an unreasonableness about that which irritated him.

He felt it more distinctly when she proposed taking an omnibus instead of the cab he had signalled. “ Oh, of course, if you prefer it,” he said ; and there was almost a trace of injured feeling in his voice. It was so much easier to talk in a cab.

He lost his apprehensions presently, for it became obvious to him that this was only a mood, coming, as he said to himself devoutly, from the Lord knew what combination of circumstances—he would think that out afterwards,—but making Elfrida none the less agreeable while it lasted. Under its influence

she kept away from all the matters she was fondest of discussing with that extraordinary candour and startling equity of hers, and talked to him with a pretty cleverness about commonplaces of sorts arising out of the day's news, the shops, the weather. She treated them all with a gaiety that made her face a fascinating study while she talked and pointed them, as it were, with all the little poises and expressions and reserves which are commonly a feminine result of considerable social training. Kendal, entering into her whim, involuntarily compared her with an acknowledged successful girl of the season, with whom he had sat out two dances the night before in Eaton Square, to the successful girl's disadvantage. Finding something lacking in that, he came upon a better analogy in a young married lady of the diplomatic circle, who had lately been dipping the third finger of her left hand into politics with the effect of considerably increasing her note. This struck him as satisfactory, and he enjoyed finding completion for his parallel wherever her words and gestures offered it. He took her

at the wish she implied, and eddied with her round the pool which some counter-current of her nature had made for the hour in its stream, pleasantly enough. He attempted once, as Elfrida unbuttoned her gloves at their little table at the Hyacinth, to get her to talk about her work on the *Age*.

"Please—*please* don't mention that," she said. "It is too revolting. You don't know how it makes me suffer."

A moment later she returned to it of her own accord, however. "It is absurd to try to extract pledges from people," she said; "but I should really be happier—*much* happier—if you would promise me something."

"By Heaven, I will promise *anything*," Kendal quoted laughing, from a poet much in vogue.

"Only this—I hope I am not selfish"—she hesitated; "but I think—yes, I think I must be selfish here. It is that you will never read the *Age*."

"I never do!" leapt to his lips, but he stopped it in time. "And why?" he asked instead.

“Ah, you know why. It is because you might recognize my work in it—by accident you might—and that would be so painful to me. It is not my best—please believe it is not my best.”

“On one condition I promise,” he said,—“that when you do your best you will tell me where to find it.”

She looked at him gravely and considered. As she did so, it seemed to Kendal that she was regarding his whole moral, mental, and material nature; he could almost see it reflected in the glass of her great dark eyes.

“Certainly, yes. That is fair—if you really and truly care to see it. And I don’t know,” she added, looking up at him from her soup, “that it matters whether you do or not, so long as you carefully and accurately pretend that you do. When my best, my real best, sees the life of common——”

“Type,” he suggested.

“Type,” she repeated unsmilingly, “I shall be so insatiate for criticism—I ought to say praise—that I shall even go so far as to send you a marked copy—*very plainly*

marked, with blue pencil. Already"—she smiled with a charming effect of assertiveness—"I have bought the blue pencil."

"Will it come soon?" Kendal asked seriously.

"*Cher ami*," Elfrida said, drawing her handsome brows together a little, "it will come sooner than you expect. That is what I want," she went on deliberately, "more than anything else in the whole world, to do things—*good* things, you understand—and to have them appreciated and paid for in the admiration of people who feel and see and know. For me life has nothing else—except the things that other people do, better and worse than mine."

"Better and worse than yours," Kendal repeated. "Can't you think of them apart?"

"No, I can't," Elfrida interrupted. "I have tried, and I can *not*. I know it's a weakness—at least, I am half persuaded that it is,—but I must have the personal standard in everything."

“But you are a hero-worshipper—often I have seen you at it.”

“Yes,” she said cynically, while the white-capped maid who handed Kendal asparagus stared at her with a curiosity few of the Hyacinth’s lady-diners inspired. “And when I look into that I find it is because of a secret consciousness that tells me that I, in the hero’s place, should have done just the same thing. Or else it is because of the gratification my vanity finds in my sympathy with his work, whatever it is. Oh, it is no special virtue, my kind of hero-worship.” The girl looked across at Kendal, and laughed a bright frank laugh, in which was no discontent with what she had been telling him.

“You are candid,” Kendal said.

“Oh yes, I’m candid. I don’t mind lying for a noble end, but it isn’t a noble end to deceive one’s self.”

““Oh purblind race of miserable men!”” Kendal began lightly, but she stopped him.

“Don’t,” she cried. “Nothing spoils conversation like quotations. Besides, that’s such a trite one—I learned it at school!”

But Kendal’s offence was clearly in his manner. It seemed to Elfrida that he would never sincerely consider what she had to say about herself. She went on softly, holding him with her eyes—

“You may find me a simple creature——”

“*À propos*,” laughed Kendal, easily, “what is this particular noble end?”

“Bah!” she said. “You are right. It is a lie, and it had no end at all. I am complex enough, I dare say. But this is true, that my egotism is like a little flame within me. All the best things feed it, and it is so clear that I see everything in its light. To me it is most dear and valuable—it simplifies things so. I assure you that I wouldn’t be one of the sloppy unselfish people the world is full of for anything!”

“As a source of gratification isn’t it rather limited?” Kendal asked. He was thinking of the extra drop of nervous fluid in Americans

he had been reading about in the afternoon, and wondering if it often had this development.

“I don’t quite know what you mean,” Elfrida replied. “It isn’t a source of gratification; it’s a channel. And it intensifies everything so that I don’t care how little comes that way. If there’s anything of me left when I die, it will be that little fierce flame. And when I do the tiniest thing—write the shortest sentence that rings *true*, see a beauty or a joy which the common herd pass by, I have my whole life in the flame and it becomes my soul. I’m sure I have no other! When you say that there is no real pleasure in the world that does not come through art,” Elfrida went on again, widening her eyes seriously, “don’t you feel as if you were uttering something religious—part of a creed—as the Mussulman feels when he says, ‘there is no God but one God, and Mahomet is His Prophet’? I do.”

“I never say it,” Kendal returned with a smile. “Does that make one a Philistine, or a Hindu, or what?”

“ *You* a Philistine ! ” Elfrida cried, as they rose from the little table. “ You are saying a thing that is absolutely wicked.”

Her quasi-conventional mood had vanished completely, and as they drove together in a hansom through the mysterious movement of the lamp-lit London streets, toward her lodging, she plunged enjoyingly into certain theories of her religion, which embraced Arnold and Aristotle and did not exclude Mr. Whistler, a composite creed, making wide, ineffectual, and presumptuous grasps to include all beauty and all faith : she threw handfuls of these things at Kendal, who watched them vanish into the air with pleasure and asked if he might smoke. At which she reflected, deciding that for the present he might not ; but when they reached her lodgings she would permit him to renew his acquaintance with Buddha, and give him a cigarette.

During the hour they smoked and talked together Elfrida was wholly delightful ; and only one thing occurred to mar the enjoyment of the evening, as Kendal remembered it,

That was Mr. Golightly Ticke, who came up and smoked too, and seemed to have extraordinary familiarity, for such an utterly impossible person, with Miss Bell's literary engagements. On his way home Kendal reflected that it was doubtless a question of time — she would take to the customs of civilization by degrees, and the sooner the better.

CHAPTER XV.

SHORTLY afterward, Elfrida read Mr. Pater's "Marius," with what she herself called, somewhat insincerely, a "hungry and hopeless" delight. I cannot say that this Oxonian's tender classical re-creation had any critical effect upon her; she probably found it much too limpid and untroubled to move her in the least. I mention it by way of saying that Lawrence Cardiff lent it to her with a smile of half-indulgent, half-contemptuous assent to some of her ideas, which was altered when she returned the volume, by the active necessity of defending his own. Elfrida had been accepted at the Cardiffs' with the ready tolerance which they had for types that were remarkable to them and not entirely disagreeable, though Janet began by telling her father that it was impos-

sible that Elfrida should be a type—she was an exception of the most exceptionable sort. “I’ll admit her to be abnormal, if you like,” Cardiff would return, “but only from an insular point of view. I dare say they grow that way in Illinois.” But that was in the early stages of their acquaintance with Miss Bell, which ripened with unprecedented rapidity for an acquaintance in Kensington Square. It was before Janet had taken to walking across the Gardens with Elfrida in the half-hour between tea-time and dressing for dinner, when the two young women, sometimes under dripping umbrellas, would let the right omnibus follow the wrong one toward Fleet Street twice and thrice in their disinclination to postpone what they had to say to each other. It was also before Elfrida’s invasion of the library and fee-simple of the books, and before she had said there many things that were original, some that were impertinent, and a few that were true. The Cardiffs discussed her less freely as the weeks went on—a sure sign that she was becoming better liked, accepted less as a

phenomenon and more as a friend. There grew up in Janet the beginnings of the strong affection which she felt for a very few people, an affection which invariably mingled itself with a lively desire to bestir herself on their account, to be fully informed as to their circumstances, and, above all, to possess relations of absolute directness with them. She had an imperious successful strain which insisted upon all this; she was a capable creature of much perception for twenty-four, and she had a sense of injury when, for any reason, she was not allowed to use her faculties for the benefit of any one she liked in a way which excited the desire to do it. Janet had to reproach herself, when she thought of it, that this sort of liking seldom came by entirely approved channels, and hardly ever found an object in her visiting-list. Its first and almost its only essential, to speak boldly, was an artistic susceptibility with some sort of relation to her own, which her visiting-list did not often supply, though it might have been said to overflow with more widely recognized

virtues. For that, Miss Cardiff was known to be willing to sacrifice the Thirty-nine articles, respectable antecedents, the possession of a dress coat. Her willingness was the more widely known because, in the circle which fate had drawn around her—ironically, she sometimes thought,—it was not usual to sacrifice these things. As for Janet's own artistic susceptibility, it was a very private atmosphere of her soul. She breathed it, one might say, only occasionally, and with a kind of delicious shame. She was incapable of sharing her caught-up felicity there with any one, but it was indispensable that she should see it sometimes in the eyes of others less contained, less conscious, whose sense of humour might be more slender perhaps. Her own nature was practical and managing in its ordinary aspect, and she had a degree of tact that was always interfering with her love of honesty. Having established a friendship by the arbitrary law of sympathy, it must be admitted that she had an instinctive way of trying to strengthen it by voluntary benefits, for affection was a great need with her.

It was only about this time, and very gradually, that she began to realize how much more she cared for John Kendal than for other people. Since it seemed to be obvious that Kendal gave her only a share of the affectionate interest he had for humanity at large, the realization was not wholly agreeable, and Janet found Elfrida, on this account, even a more valuable distraction than she otherwise would. One of the matters Miss Bell was in the habit of discussing with some vivacity was the sexlessness of artistic sympathy. Upon this subject Janet found her quite inspired. She made a valiant effort to illumine her thoughts of Kendal by the light Elfrida threw upon such matters; and although she had to confess that the future was still hid in embarrassed darkness, she did manage to construct a theory by which it was possible to grope along for the present. She also cherished a hope that this trouble would leave her, as a fever abates in a night, that she would awake some morning, if she only had patience, strong and well.

In other things Miss Cardiff was sometimes jarred rather than shocked by the American girl's mental attitudes—which, she began to find, were not so posed as her physical ones. Elfrida often left her repelled and dissenting. The dissent she showed vigorously, the repulsion she concealed, sore with herself because of the concealment. But she could not lose Elfrida, she told herself, and besides, it was only a matter of a little tolerance—time and life would change her, tone her inner self down into the something altogether exquisite and perfect that she was, to look at, now.

Elfrida called the Cardiffs' house the oasis of Kensington, and valued her privileges there more than she valued anything else in the circumstances about her, except perhaps, the privilege she enjoyed in making the single contribution to the *Decade* of which we know. That was an event lustrous in her memory, the more lustrous because it remained solitary; and when the editor's cheque made its tardy appearance, she longed to keep it as a glorious archive, glorious that is to say, in suggestion, if not particularly

impressive intrinsically. In the end she fought the temptation of giving herself a dinner a day for a fortnight out of it, and bought a slender gold bangle with the money, which she slipped upon her wrist with a resolution to keep it there always. It must be believed that her personal decoration did not enter materially into this design; the bangle was an emblem of one success, and an earnest of others. She wore it as she might have worn a medal, except that a medal was a public voice, and the little gold hoop spoke only to her.

After the triumph that the bangle signified, Elfrida felt most satisfaction in what was constantly present to her mind as her conquest of the Cardiffs. She measured its importance by their value. Her admiration for Janet's work in the beginning had been as sincere as her emulation of its degree of excellence had been passionate, and neither feeling had diminished with their intimacy. In Lawrence Cardiff she felt vaguely the qualities that made him a marked man among his fellows; his intellectual breadth

and keenness, his poise of brain, if one might call it so, and the *habilité* with which, without permitting it to be part of his character, he sometimes allowed himself to charm even people of whom he disapproved. These things were indeterminately present to her, and led her often to speculate as to how it was that Mr. Cardiff's work expressed him so little. It seemed to her that the one purpose of a personality like his was its expression, otherwise one might as well be of the ruck. "You write with your intellectual faculties only," she said to him once; "your soul is curiously dumb." But that was later.

The plane of Elfrida's relations with Janet altered gradually, one might say, from the inclined, with Elfrida on her knees at the lower end, to the horizontal. It changed insensibly enough, through the freemasonry of confessed and unconfessed ideals, through growing attraction, through the feeling they shared, though only Janet voiced it, that there was nothing but the opportunities and the experience of four years between them,

that in the end Elfrida would do better, stronger, more original work than she. Elfrida was so much more original a person, Janet declared to herself; so—and when she hesitated for this word she usually said “enigmatical.” The answer to the enigma, Janet was sure, would be written large in publishers’ advertisements one day. In the meantime it was a vast satisfaction to her to be, as it were, behind the enigma; to consider it with the privileges of intimacy. These young women felt their friendship deeply, in their several ways. It held for them all sacredness and honour and obligation. For Elfrida it had an intrinsic beauty and interest, like a curio—she had half a dozen such curios in the museum of her friends—and for Janet it added something to existence that was not there before, more delightful and important than a mere opportunity of expansion. The time came speedily when it would have been a positive pain to either of them to hear the other discussed, however favourably.

CHAPTER XVI.

LADY HALIFAX and her daughter had met Miss Bell several times at the Cardiffs', in a casual way, before it occurred to either of them to take any sort of advantage of the acquaintance. The younger lady had a shivering and frightened delight in occasionally wading ankle-deep in unconventionality, but she had lively recollections in connection with the Cardiffs of having been very nearly taken off her feet. They had since decided that it was more discreet to ignore Janet's enthusiasms, which were sometimes quite impossible in their verdict, and always improbable. The literary ladies and gentlemen whom the ghost of the departed Sir William brought more or less unwillingly to Lady Halifax's drawing-rooms,

were all of unexceptionable *cachet*; the Halifaxes were constantly seeing paragraphs about them in the "Literary Gossip" department of the *Athenian*, mentioning their state of health, their retirement from scientific appointments, or the fact that their most recent work of fiction had reached its fourth edition. Lady Halifax always read the *Athenian*, even the publishers' announcements; she liked to keep "in touch," she said, with the literary activities of the day, and it gave her a special gratification to notice the prosperity of her writing friends indicated in tall figures. Miss Halifax read it too, but she liked the "Art Notes" best; it was a matter of complaint with her that the house was not more open to artists—new, original artists, like John Kendal. In answer to this Lady Halifax had a habit of stating that she did not see what more they could possibly want than the President of the Royal Academy, and the one or two others that came already. As for John Kendal, he was certainly new and original, but he was respectable, notwithstanding,

and they could be certain that he was not putting his originality on, with a hearth-brush, for the sake of advertisement. Lady Halifax was not so sure about Elfrida's originality, of which she had been given a glimpse or two at first, and which the girl's intimacy with the Cardiffs would have presupposed, in any case. But presently, and somewhat to Lady Halifax's perplexity, Miss Bell's originality disappeared. It seemed to melt into the azure of perfect good breeding, flecked by little clouds of pretty sayings and politenesses, whenever chance brought her under Lady Halifax's observation. A not unreasonable solution of the problem might have been found in Elfrida's instinctive objection to casting her pearls where they are proverbially unappreciated, and the necessity in her nature of pleasing herself by one form of agreeable behaviour if not by another. Lady Halifax, however, ascribed it to the improving influence of insular institutions, and finally concluded that it ought to be followed up.

Elfrida wore amber and white the evening

on which Lady Halifax followed it up—a Parisian modification of a design carried out originally by the Sparta dressmaker with a degree of hysteria, under Miss Bell’s direction. She wore it with a touch of unusual colour in her cheeks, and an added light in her dark eyes, that gave a winsomeness to her beauty which it had not always. A cunningly bound spray of yellow-stamened lilies followed the curving line of her low-necked dress, ending in a cluster in her bosom; the glossy little leaves of the smilax the florist had wreathed in with them stood sharply against the whiteness of her neck. Her hair was massed at the back of her head, simply and girlishly enough, and its fluffiness about her forehead made a sweet shadow above her eyes. She was in a little fever of expectation; Janet had talked so much about this reception. Janet had told her that the real thing, the real English literary thing in numberless volumes, would be on view at Lady Halifax’s. Miss Cardiff had mentioned this in their discussion of the Arcadia Club, at which institution she had scoffed so unbearably that Elfrida, while

she cherished the memory of Georgiadi, had not mentioned it since. Perhaps, after all, she reflected, Janet was just a trifle blind where people were not hall-marked. It did not occur to her to consider how far she herself illustrated this theory.

But as she went down Mrs. Jordan's narrow flights of stairs, covered with worn oil-cloth, she kissed her own soft arm for pure pleasure.

"You are ravishing to-night," she told herself.

Golightly Ticke's door was open, and he was standing in it, picturesquely smoking a cigarette with the candle burning behind him, "just to see you pass," he informed her.

Elfrida paused, and threw back her cloak. "How is it?" she asked, posing for him with its folds gathered in either hand.

Ticke scanned her with leisurely appreciation. "It is exquisite," he articulated.

Elfrida gave him a look that might have intoxicated nerves less accustomed to dramatic effects.

"Then whistle me a cab," she said.

Mr. Ticke whistled her a cab, and put her into it. There was the least pressure of his long fingers as he took her hand, and Elfrida forbade herself to resent it. She felt her own beauty so much that night that she could not complain of an enthusiasm for it in such a *belle âme* as Golightly.

They went up to the drawing-room together, Elfrida and the Cardiffs, and Lady Halifax immediately introduced to Miss Bell a hollow-cheeked gentleman with a long grey beard and bushy eyebrows as a fellow-countryman.

“You can compare your impressions of Hyde Park and St. Paul’s,” said Lady Halifax, “but don’t call us ‘Britishers.’ It really isn’t pretty of you.”

Elfrida discovered that the bearded gentleman was the principal of a college in Florida, and corresponded regularly at one time with the late Sir William. “It is to that,” said he ornately, “that I owe the honour of joining this brilliant company to-night.” He went on to state that he was over there

principally on account of his health ; acute dyspepsia he had, it seemed he'd got out of running order generally, regularly off the track. "But I've just about concluded," he continued, with a pathetic twinkle under his bushy brows, "that I might have a worse reason for going back. What do you think of the meals in Victoria's country, Miss Bell? It seems to me sometimes that I'd give the whole British Museum for a piece of Johnny-cake."

Elfrida reflected that this was not precisely what she expected to experience, and presently the hollow-cheeked Floridian was again at Lady Halifax's elbow for disposal, while the young lady whose appearance and nationality had given him so much room for hope, smilingly drifted away from him. The Cardiffs were talking to a rosy, smooth-faced, round-waistcoated gentleman, just returned from Siberia, about the unfortunate combination of accidents by which he lost the mail train twice in three days, and Janet had just shaken hands with a short and cheerful looking lady astrologist.

“Behind that large person in the heliotrope brocade—she’s the wife of the *Daily Mercury*—there’s a small sofa,” Janet said, in an undertone. “I don’t think she’ll occupy it; the brocade looks so much better standing. No; there she goes! Let us sit down.” As they crossed the room Janet added, “In another minute we should have been shut up in a Russian prison. Daddy’s incarcerated already. And the man told all he knew about them in the public prints a month ago!”

They sat down luxuriously together, and made ready, in their palm-shaded corner, to wreak the whole of their irresponsible youth upon Lady Halifax’s often venerable and always considerable guests. The warm atmosphere of the room had the perceptible charge of personalities. People in almost every part of it were trying to look unconscious as they pointed out other people.

“Tell me about everybody—everybody,” said Elfrida.

“H’m! I don’t see anybody that *is* anybody, at this moment. Oh, there’s Sir

Bradford Barker. Regard him well, for a brave soul is Sir Bradford, Frida mine !”

“ A soldier ? At this end of the century one can’t feel an enthusiasm for killing.”

“ Not in the least. A member of Parliament who writes verses, and won’t be intimidated by *Punch* into not publishing them. And the man he is talking to has just done a history of the Semitic nations. He took me down to dinner last night, and we talked in the most intelligent manner about the various ways of preparing crabs. He liked them in five ‘ styles.’ I wouldn’t subscribe to more than three. That little man with the orchid, that daddy has just seized, is the author of the last of the ‘ Rulers of India ’ series, Sir Somebody Something, K.C.S.I. My unconscionable humbug of a parent probably wants to get something approaching a fact out of him. Daddy’s writing a thing for one of the reviews on the elective principle for India this week. He says he’s the only writer on Indian subjects who isn’t disqualified by having been there, and is consequently quite free of prejudice !”

“Ah,” said Elfrida, “how banal! I thought you said there would be something real here—somebody in whose garment’s hem there would be virtue!”

“And I suggest the dress-coat of the historian of the Semitic nations!” Janet laughed. “Well, if nearly all our poets are dead, and our novelists are too improper to be asked to evening parties, I can’t help it, can I? Here is Mr. Kendal, at all events!”

Kendal came up with his perfect manners, and immediately it seemed to Elfrida that their little group became distinct from the rest—more important, more worthy of observation. Kendal never added anything to the unities of their conversation when he joined these two, he seemed rather to break up what they had to say to each other and attract it to himself. He always gave an accent to the life and the energy of their talk, but he made them both self-conscious and wakeful—seemed to put them, as it were, upon their guard one against another, in a way which Janet found vaguely distressing. It was invariably as if Kendal turned

their intercourse into a joust by his mere presence as spectator; as if—Janet put it plainly to herself, reddening—they mutely asked him to bestow the wreath on one of them. She almost made up her mind to ask Elfrida where their understanding went to when John Kendal came up, but she had not found it possible yet. There was an embarrassing chance that Elfrida did not feel their change of attitude, which would entail nameless surmises.

“You ought to be at work,” Janet said severely to Kendal; “back at Barbizon or in the fields somewhere. It won’t be always June.”

“Ah, would you banish him!” Elfrida exclaimed daintily. “Surely Hyde Park is rustic enough—in June.”

Kendal smiled into her face. “It combines all the charm of the country——” he began.

“And the chic of the town,” Elfrida finished for him gaily. “I know—I’ve seen the Boot Show!”

“Extremely frivolous,” Janet commented.

“Ah, now we are condemned!” Elfrida answered, and for an instant it almost seemed as if it were so.

“Daddy wants you to go and paint straggling grey stone villages in Scotland now—straggling, climbing grey stone villages, with only a bit of blue at the end of the ‘Dead Wynd,’ where it turns into the churchyard gate.”

“How charming!” Elfrida exclaimed

“I suppose he has been saturating himself with Barrie,” Kendal said. “If I could reproduce Barrie on canvas, I’d go—like a shot. By the way, Miss Bell, there’s somebody you are interested in—do you see a middle-aged man, rather bald, thick-set, coming this way?—George Jasper.”

“Really!” Elfrida exclaimed, jumping to her feet. “Oh, *thank* you! The most consummate artist in human nature that the time has given,” she added with intensity. “There can be no question! Oh, I am *so* happy to have seen him!”

“I’m not altogether sure,” Kendal began, and then he stopped, looking at Janet in

astonished question. Elfrida had taken half a dozen steps into the middle of the room—steps so instinct with effect that already as many heads were turning to look at her. Her eyes were large with excitement, her cheeks flushed, and she bent her head a little, almost as if to see nothing that might dissuade her from her purpose.

The author of “The Alien,” “A Moral Catastrophe,” “Her Disciple,” and a number of other volumes which cause envy and heart-burnings among publishers, in the course of his somewhat short-sighted progress across the room, paused with a confused effort to remember who this pretty girl might be who wanted to speak to him.

Elfrida said, “Pardon me!” and Mr. Jasper instantly apprehended that there could be no question of that, with her face. She was holding out her hand, and he took it with absolute mystification. Elfrida had turned very pale, and a dozen people were listening. “Give me the right to say I have done this!” she said, looking at him

with shy bravery in her beautiful eyes. She half sank on one knee and lifted the hand that wrote "A Moral Catastrophe" to her lips.

Mr. Jasper repossessed himself of it rather too hastily for dignity, and inwardly he expressed his feelings by a puzzled oath. Outwardly he looked somewhat ashamed of having inspired this young lady's enthusiasm, but he did his confused best, on the spur of the moment, to carry off the situation as one of the contingencies to which the semi-public life of a popular novelist is always subject.

"Really you are—much too good. I can't imagine—if the case had been reversed——"

Mr. Jasper found himself, accustomed as he was, to the exigencies of London drawing-rooms, awkwardly in want of words. And in the bow with which he further defined his discomfort, he added to it by dropping the bit of stephanotis which he wore in his button-hole.

Elfrida sprang to pick it up. "Oh," she cried, "it's broken at the stem! See, you cannot wear it any more! May I keep it?"

A deadly silence had been widening round them, and now the daughter of the historian of the Semitic races broke it by twittering into a laugh behind her fan. Janet met Kendal's eyes instinctively—he was burning red, and his manner was eloquent of his helplessness. Angry with herself for having waited so long, Janet joined Elfrida just as the twitter made itself heard, and Mr. Jasper's face began to stiffen with indignation.

“Ah, Miss Cardiff!” he said with relief. “How do you do? The rooms are rather warm, don't you think?”

“I want to introduce you to my Am—my very great friend, Miss Bell, Mr. Jasper,” Janet said quickly, as conversation began to hum across the room again.

Elfrida turned to her reproachfully. “If I had known it was at all possible that you would do *that*,” she said, “I might have—waited. But I did not know.”

People were still looking at them with curious attentiveness; they were awkwardly solitary. Kendal, in his corner, was asking himself how she could have struck such a

false note, and of all people, Jasper, whose polished work held no trace of his personality—whose pleasure it was to have no public entity whatever! As Jasper moved off almost immediately, Kendal saw his tacit discomfort in the set of his shoulders, and so sure was he of Elfrida's embarrassment that he himself slipped away to avoid adding to it.

“It was all wrong and ridiculous, and she was mad to do it,” thought Janet an hour later as she drove home with her father. “But why need John Kendal have blushed for her?”

END OF VOL. I.









